Business Friday
Know Pinoys' quirks to boost delightful sales
Across / A12
NPAs raid Pampanga police station
Sports
Pistons take 2-1 lead over Pacers

Just Shop is not just any magazine. It's the latest addition to the 150-family Publishers Library! Get it free with the current morning issues. Free for Metro Manila subscribers. Story on Page A8

Buzz Tanzon / A22
Sugod! 3 realidta ng kabayanihan

Biazon claims 12th spot; Barbers says it ain't over

By Martin P. Martel and Michael Lim Ubac

HALTHE lead of Rodolfo Biazon over Bobby Barbers in the race for the 12th slot in the Senate dwindled from 42,000 to just 10,000 votes.

From the Commission on Elections (Comelec) tcount manv

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Cebu cardinal, Negros bishop call for sobriety over canvass

By Bernadette A. Parco and Carlo B. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—With the heated debates in Congress stalling the canvass of votes for president and vice president, Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal and Bishop Vicente Navarra of The Sacred Diocese are urging the

Friday, May 28, 2004 • 36 pages / vol. 19 / no. 178 www.inq7.net

Economy up 6.4 percent

First quarter growth figures exceed forecasts of analysts

By Michelle V. Ramos
Business

THE PHILIPPINE economy grew at a surprisingly fast pace in the first quarter on robust farm output and election spending, but many economists voiced doubts the strong growth could be sustained in the face of rising oil prices.

The country's gross domestic product (GDP) grew 6.4 percent in the first three months of the year, compared with 4.8 percent in the same period last year, according to the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB). Economists earlier forecast a GDP growth of between 4.3 and 5.3 percent.

GDP is the total value of goods produced and services rendered in the country. It does not include remittances from overseas Filipino workers.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said the first quarter GDP growth was the country's strongest economic performance since 2003. Other officials said this would serve as cushion rising oil prices and interest rates.

Mr. Macapagal described the GDP figures as "the silver lining" in the midst of the series of controversies that have debated the formal proclamation of the winner of the hotly contested presidential election.

Even so, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said the government was cautiously optimistic over the country's economic prospects for the full year.

"For the moment, we are just hoping to meet our 4.9 percent to 5.8 percent GDP target given the oil price increases that may put a little pressure on growth in the second quarter," Neri said at a news conference.

World oil prices are at their highest in 21 years, and even a pledge by Saudi Arabia to boost production hasn't reversed the trend.

The Philippines imports nearly all its oil products, and Neri said that if oil prices stayed high throughout the year, it would slash .5% percentage point from the 2004 GDP growth.

The Gross national product (GNP)—boosted by remittances sent home by some 8 million Filipinos working overseas—climbed 6.2 percent in the year through the first quarter, following an upwardly revised growth of 4.8 percent in the fourth quarter.

While the local economy appeared immune to the adverse effects of high oil prices in the first quarter, some analysts said the second quarter probably wouldn't fare so well.

"It's a very devastating one-off, but I don't think it will continue," Standard Chartered Bank regional economist Mike Moran told Dow

ECONOMY A-10

Opposition to zero in on 15 CoCs

By Christine O. Avendaño and Cynthia D. Balana

WEBB CONCEDES wants to examine the votes for president and vice president; expect the opposition to zero in on 10 to 15 certificates of canvass (CoCs) covering provinces where it believes massive cheating occurred.

Congress, however, failed to approve the proposed rules for canvassing for presidential and vice presidential after deliberations on amendments to the rules continued up to prior time at 11:30 last night.

At the joint session earlier yesterday, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Senegan Rep. Roilo Golez said it would be lawyers of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino who would take up the pertinent CoCs as the canvass of the votes proceeds.

Pimentel said the examination of the 80-15 CoCs was not expected to delay the canvass. Sources said Chavez made up only 14 percent of the total 178 CoCs in the custody of

SENATORS A-11

Chavez names 4 'runners' in agri fund scam

By Bernard N. Nieves

SOLAIRE SOLETTON General Frank Chavez yesterday identified the "runners" of an agriculture undersecretary who he said was involved in the "big steal" of Fiel Estilloveros Mike Arroyo in the disbursement of P728 million in agricultural funds that reportedly bankrolled the election campaign of President Macapagal-Arroyo and her allies.

Chavez named the alleged runners as Sen. Gregorio Honasan, Jinggoy Estrada, Jimmy Pedit, Lenny Aquino and Jane Bihag.

"I am giving them 24 hours to cooperate, less I include them in the plunder charges, which is nonbailable," said Chavez, a losing senatorial candidate.

In an amended complaint vs the plunder case he filed against Mr. Macapagal and other top government officials, he said the runners

AGRI FUND A-10

Gil's party mates want to scalp him

By Philip C. Tubeo

DEPUTY Ayala-funded career to show business and a town high profile image, businessman Eddie Gil is still being hounded by talk that traded him (thoughtful) failed presidential bid.

Now, Gil's candidacies in the last elections are complaining of his alleged failure to reimburse them for

GIL'S PARTY A-10

JDV apologizes to nation for 'shut up' furor

By Cynthia D. Balana

SPEAKER Jose de Venecia yesterday apologized to the nation for the pandemonium in Congress on Wednesday night, which started when an annoyed observer in the gallery shot a "shut up" note to Magnificent Rep. Dakila Cabangbang.

"There was an exchange of strong statements which should have not happened, and I apologize for that. My fine colleagues, my fine cohorts, was so rapidly calls down the session (Wednesday) night," De Venecia said, adding that he had also extended an apology to Cabangbang and Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez.

De Venecia said he could number both Di

JDV A-11

PAWN of the three opposition Rep. Dakila Cabangbang (seated left) after the "shut up" incident caused uproar on Wednesday night. Rep. Celso Lobregat is to his right. He stepped at area up to the House floor as it's near to the domain of delay.

THE BUZZWORDS of the day are snapshot along Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City by supporters of President Macapagal.

THE VOTE of his nation lies inside. Fr. Ismael Jones, seen reminding a certificate of canvass that would determine who will lead the Filipinos in the next six years. But they remain divided after four days of a joint session of Congress sitting as the National Board of Canvassers.

RP, US scientists find rare rodent on Banahaw

By Voit Contreras

BANAHAW, a mystical and sacred mountain to many, is also home to a small, mouse-like mammal that experts say may not be found anywhere else in the world.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources yesterday announced the recent discovery of the mammal by a team of Filipino and American biologists. Initial examination showed it is not related to any other rodents family in species known to inhabit Banahaw, a mountain that straddles the provinces of Laguna and Quezon, at the rim of Lafon.

The animal, with a body if one long and a thicke tail, sets itself apart by having the features of a mouse. Its head is considerably larger in proportion to its body and it has whiskers five times the width of the head. Weighing about 35 grams, the creature sports a coat of brown and yellowish.

Its discoverers also noted that the animal's heavy muscled paws may explain its unique diet: it is the only known dweller that eats bite into and eat the core of the Kalumala tree.

The researcher was found two weeks ago near a shrub said there were by a team composed of Dr. Lawrence Heaney of the Field Museum of Natural History in the University of Chicago, Dr. Rick Rickart of the Utah Museum of Natural History, Danilo Balete

RODENT A-10

WHAT is it? Acute creatures found on Mt. Banahaw and nowhere else in the world.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
FRIDAY, MAY 28, 2004
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Palace defends release of tally

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

MALACAÑANG yesterday defended the release of the presidential election tally ahead of the canvass of votes by Congress saying it was done to counter opposition claims its standard-bearer Fernando Poe Jr had won over President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said Rumadu Macalintal, the President's lawyer in the congressional canvass, released the tally based on the certificates of canvass that the Commission on Elections submitted after the senatorial and party-list votes "precisely to counter" Poe's claim that he had won the presidential election.

"This is just to explain and to balance the story because if you do not explain the situation, the people might be misled into thinking that what the KNP (the opposition Koalisyon ng Naghahangad Pilipinas) is saying is the truth," Bunye said in a Radyo ng Bayan interview.

"That is why Secretary Macalintal and [Atty. Ian] Agra presented the information that they did in a media conference. But this is not official. We know that the official count is the count to be done by the joint session of Congress," Bunye added.

Agra is another of the President's lawyers for the canvass to be conducted by Congress.

Macalintal and Gabriel Claudio, administration 14-coalition campaign manager, first presented the results of the elections at a press conference at the Westin Philippine Plaza hotel on Monday.

They said that based on 271 of the 177 cry offshoots of casimiro (CoCa) tabulated by the Comelec in the senatorial race, Mr Macapagal received 13,554,127 votes to Poe's 11,401,045, for a winning margin of 1,660,750 votes.

Macalintal and Michael Defensor, political spokesperson of the President, presented the same figures at another media forum the following day.

Deputy presidential spokesperson Ricardo Saludo said the two were merely exercising their freedom of expression.

BUNYE

"All that these people had done was simply state what they said were tallies compiled by the Comelec based on returns tabulated for the senatorial and party-list candidates," Saludo said at a Palace briefing.

He said Malacañang would not ask the officials to dress up.

"No, no, no. We certainly do not want to be held to contempt [for] there is currently no reason to tell people to stop sharing information with the public. We have freedom of information and that is all they are doing. We are no reason to stop them," Saludo said.

"The officials were not citing information from a quick count that was not authorized but information from the Comelec, assuming that the information is correct. If you wish, you can ask the Comelec if the data cited by these officials was similar to their own tally," Saludo said.

Two top election officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, had disclosed earlier in the week that the Macapagal had most based on their private tally. Their comments set off a storm of protest from opposition politicians, who accused the Comelec of violating the Constitution by preempting the congressional count.

Later it was reported that one of the officials was none other than Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr himself. With an AP report

Fate of Isabela bet still hangs

By Marvin P Mardi

THE FATE of winning Isabela gubernatorial candidate Ma. Gracia Cielo Padaca would be decided by the Commission on Elections next week.

Not all commissioners had signed the resolution on the case proclaiming Padaca, and this had caused the delay in transmitting to Commission on Elections Chairman Benjamin Abalos.

The Isabela gubernatorial race was hotly contested by Padaca and incumbent Governor Dy. Jr. According to the official Comelec tally, Padaca beat reelectionist Dy by 46,292 votes. Dy is the eldest son of the late Gov. Faustino Dy Sr. who ruled the province for more than two decades.

"If the resolution was signed by four commissioners, then that would carry the 3 board [the one of the four who signed did not participate," Abalos said, adding he had not seen a copy.

The resolution pointed by Elections Commissioner Mehol Sadain was earlier signed by colleagues Resurreccion Borra, who admitted to reporters that he had supported Padaca's proclamation.

Padaca's proclamation was stopped by Election Commissioners Virgilio Garcillano and Rufino Javier of the Comelec's first division on May 22. Borra, the third member of the division, did not participate in the discussion on the Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) against Padaca.

The TRO was based on a complaint filed by Dy who alleged that Padaca engaged in terrorism acts during the campaign period.

Garcillano had explained Borra has the most weight to affirm his confirmation, and said he was thinking of inhibiting himself from the proceedings.

The United Methodist Church-Isabela North District in Cabagan City had asked the Comelec to immediately proclaim the winning governor and other local candidates in the May 10 elections.

Church leaders said the will of the people should be respected to defuse the growing tension between the winning and losing candidates. They added that there was no basis to claim that commission which had canvassed the people is not for certain candidates.

The rebels earlier urged residents to exercise "people power" to pressure the Comelec to proclaim Padaca, congressional candidate Anthony Miranda, and two board members of Isabela's fourth district. With Villamor Tuaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Briefing to envoys was on security—DFA

By Jaroslav Anbig

THE DEPARTMENT of Foreign Affairs yesterday said the briefing it gave Monday to the diplomatic corps was not meant to convince the foreign envoys that President Macapagal-Arroyo had won the May 10 elections but to clarify to them the security situation in the country following the exercise.

"We wanted to assure them that everything was under control and to clarify reports that some groups were celebrating destabilization efforts," DFA Undersecretary for Administration Franklin Ebdale said at a press conference yesterday.

"Diplomatic briefings are not a forum to declare who's the winner. We wanted them (the envoys) to know officially what's happening and not just rely on what they read in the papers," he said.

The undersecretary said diplomatic briefings were routinely held, and never often called during major events taking place in the country like the recent elections.

In an interview after the briefing, Ebdale said reports of destabilization, pro-proclamation overtones and "false like" openings were discussed at the meeting.

He said that such reports may have been due to premature proclamations by the opposition party that it had won the presidential race.

According to Ebdale, only one diplomat posed a query at the briefing. He said the Japanese Embassy's political minister, Masaharu Kohida, asked how much longer the national canvass would take.

Ebdale said he and Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Albert assured the diplomats that "after this is over, the security situation would be as it was pre-election."

"The Japanese were concerned as what (agenda may have been affected by the elections so that they would be guided on what to do in areas where they have official development projects," Ebdale said.

Gov't to stay within deficit target—DBM

THE PHILIPPINES will stay within its budget deficit ceiling this year despite allegations of massive spending related to the May 10 elections, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin reiterated yesterday.

"The deficit ceiliening school-ide will stay. There will be no compromise on that," Boncodin said in a statement.

She was referring to the government's commitment to reduce its deficit this year to P197.5 billion despite the possibility of higher-than-programmed spending amid rising oil prices and revenue cuts.

Boncodin added that if actual expenditures should exceed the target level, the government would work to increase revenue collection.

The government has been under pressure from multilateral institutions and credit rating agencies to reduce its deficit but there has also been pressure to spend more on vital infrastructure and services needed to sustain economic growth.

President Macapagal has been trying to boost tax collection but many revenue measures have remained stalled in Congress.

The opposition has accused the government of massive spending to ensure an Macapagal victory in the May 10 presidential elections but officials deny that they overspent for political purposes.

The results of the election will have to be officially proclaimed but exit polls and preliminary counts show that Ms Macapagal is by likely winning over by many rival, movie star Fernando Poe.

The Philippines posted a budget deficit of P64.7 billion for the first four months of the year. AFP

Former Pangasinan mayor gunned down

DAGUPAN CITY— The former mayor of San Nicolas town in Pangasinan was shot dead yesterday by three motorcycle-riding men in front of the town gymnasium, police reports said.

The 53-year-old Gerardo Rodrigo, a three-term mayor of San Nicolas, had just come from a meeting with his wife, Mayor Christopher Jones, when he was attacked.

It was the second attack on Rodrigo, barangay chair of Poblacion Sitio and president of the Liga ng mga Barangay of San Nicolas. In August 2003, he was shot and wounded by armed men while he was on his way home from a wedding party.

The younger Rodrigo lost his reelection bid to Leonilo Calderon, a long-time political rival of the Rodrigos.

Rodrigo was the town mayor for 21 years, starting in 1988 when he was appointed officer in charge by former President Aquino.

He was elected in 1992, 1995 and 1998. In 2001, his son Christopher Jones succeed won as mayor.

Rodrigo died hours reaching the Eastern Pangasinan District Hospital in nearby Sayog town from multiple bullet wounds.

Chief Insp. Rhode Esperon, San Nicolas police chief, said the assailants used a cal. 45 pistol and a cal. 380 pistol as shown by the empty shells recovered from the scene.

Despite threats to his life, Rodrigo never asked the police for security escorts. He had no security men with him when he was slain, according to initial police reports.

The former mayor had just attended a meeting called by his son at the gymnasium and was walking home which was a block away.

Police said they arrested a suspect, Jonathan Joyno de Leon, 28, of Barangay Cares in Nueva Ecija, Gloria Maris Pe-Tec seized from De Leon an M-16 Armalite rifle and a cal. 380 pistol.

Senior Supt. Mario Sanchez, the Pangasinan police director, said the killing could have been politically motivated.

San Nicolas town was placed under Commission on Elections control during the election period because of the fierce rivalry between the Rodrigo and Calderon camps.

A driver who was working for Calderon was killed during the campaign and the police suspected that the gunman was a supporter of Rodrigo.

Rodrigo was a former New People's Army rebel using the name Kumander Bulalakaw. He later joined the militia Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Unit.

During his term as mayor, he promoted the establishment of the multi-billion peso San Roque Dam in nearby San Manuel town, saying the project would displace many of his constituents.

However, he had a change of heart and became a staunch supporter of the project. Yolanda Sevilla-Pascua, PDI Stringer and Lamon Bureau

Palace admits spying on Gringo, pals in plot

By Juliet Labog-Javellana, Alexis Pupa and Christian V. Esguerra

MALACAÑANG, Security Adviser Roilo Golmez Guzmán has confirmed that the government was validating information that outgoing Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan and opposition groups are involved in a plot to destabilize the government.

"We are monitoring several groups, including Honasan," Gonzales said in a phone interview, adding that he would look closely into police allegations that Honasan was involved in destabilization plots and that he had tried to recruit some military officers around the country.

"He is one of those mentioned or being involved in destabilization efforts and we are taking these threats seriously," he added.

Gonzales described as credible the reported threats to disrupt the proclamation of the new President and Vice President and to destabilize the government.

"They could be disrupted administration but doubted that there was a group big enough to launch a serious threat.

He said the opposition was instigating the destabilization plans for several reasons.

"They could not get enough resources, they could not prove the massive cheating and the people do not want to join them," he said.

Gonzales said opposition groups were recruiting soldiers and officers but could not muster enough of them to launch a coup. He said "there is no solid leadership and even the people are not falling for it."

While Ronald Llamas, the head of the People's Movement Against Poverty (PMAP), has been going around recruiting and getting people for mass actions, he has been getting not only small amounts, P50 to P100, when it was P500 and 1000 before, he said.

Gonzales said he has not seen solid evidence to pin down Honasan.

Gonzales said he has not seen enough reason to launch a coup. He said "there is no solid leadership and even the people are not falling for it."

While Ronald Llamas, the head of the People's Movement Against Poverty (PMAP), has been going around recruiting and getting people for mass actions, he has been getting not only small amounts, P50 to P100, when it was P500 and 1000 before, he said.

Gonzales said he has not seen solid evidence to pin down Honasan.

Gonzales said he has not seen enough reason to launch a coup. He said "there is no solid leadership and even the people are not falling for it."

While Ronald Llamas, the head of the People's Movement Against Poverty (PMAP), has been going around recruiting and getting people for mass actions, he has been getting not only small amounts, P50 to P100, when it was P500 and 1000 before, he said.

Gonzales said he has not seen solid evidence to pin down Honasan.

"When it comes to Senator Honasan, I cannot give you something definite because the information we are getting is mixed. What is clear is that there is a desire to destabilize," he said.

He reiterated the denial by defeated former President Joseph Estrada that he was funding the opposition protests against the alleged massive electoral fraud but said he would still investigate the report.

"That is good if he denied it. But I would like to know where Lamberto is getting his money and how people from his cabinet joined," Gonzales said.

Malacañang yesterday said a destabilization attempt would not succeed but has reportedly issued warnings against the unnamed destabilizers.

"While we are confident that any move to destabilize the government will never succeed, we have to ensure that our democratic processes are well protected by monitoring all threats to national security and ensuring public order," Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

Police officials have linked Honasan to two alleged leftist rightist plots—Oplan Avalon in March's military junes 4 Fernando Tor Jr. were the doctors and Oplan Aklas Bayan which aims to launch massive protests against election fraud if President Macapagal-Arroyo emerges as the winner.

The spokesperson for the Philippine National Police, Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao, yesterday told reporters the police had an evidence linking Honasan with an operational plan called the Aklas Bayan allegedly hatched by the communist-backed anti-electoral fraud watchdog, the Bantayan.

Goltiao said it was only coming up with the evidence's "authenticity and implementation is a different thing," he said.

But police intelligence director Robert Delfin, who accused Honasan of being in "orchestrated fusion" with the Left, maintained that his evidence was credible and "persuasive."

Delfin was militants left in an undercover position when PNP chief Reinerio Reyes Delfin is reportedly apologized to Honasan on Tuesday night.

Asked if he would apologize to the senator, Delfin said: "Why would I do that? I didn't say anything wrong."

TOSHIBA

No. 1 Choice for Quality & Reliability

"Meet my high performance partner with a price tag that lets me save on my budget too."

Superior value yet totally affordable. Powered by the Mobile Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor. Tecra A2 Satellite series is the affordable high performance notebook for work and play.

Toshiba recommends Microsoft® Windows® XP.

Enriching multimedia experience with SRS TruSurround XT™ sound technology

Satellite A40-S130

Model No: PSAGX-[illegible]

- Intel® Celeron® Processor 2.8GHz
- Mobile® Intel® 845GV® IGP Hyper Engine
- Toshiba CoolingFlow™ Functionality Device
- 14.1" XGA TFT Display
- 256MB DDR SDRAM
- 40GB HDD with shock absorber
- CD-RW/DVD-ROM combo drive
- 56 Dial, 4 x USB 2.0, i.LINK (IEEE 1394)
- SRS TruSurround XT™ sound technology with internal stereo speakers
- Integrated 10/100 LAN for 10/100 Ethernet
- 1 Year carry-in International Limited Warranty (parts and labor)

P69,990

Satellite A40-S435

Model No: PSAGL-[illegible]

- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 3.06GHz with HT Technology
- Mobile® Intel® 865PE® IGP Hyper Engine
- Toshiba CoolingFlow™ Functionality Device
- Large 15.0" XGA TFT display
- 256MB DDR SDRAM (up to 2GB/MB)
- 40 GB HDD with shock absorber
- CD-RW/DVD-ROM combo drive
- 56 Dial, 4 x USB 2.0, i.LINK (IEEE 1394)
- SRS TruSurround XT™ sound technology with internal stereo speakers
- Integrated 10/100 LAN for 10/100 Ethernet
- 1 Year carry-in International Limited Warranty (parts and labor)

P89,990

Stunning all-in-one power and mobile multimedia

Satellite 2450-A742

Model No: PSAGL-[illegible]

FREE

- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 2.8GHz
- Mobile® Intel® IGP Hyper Engine
- Large 15.0" XGA TFT display
- 256MB DDR SDRAM (up to 1GB/MB)
- 40GB HDD
- CD-RW/DVD-ROM combo drive
- 56 dial, 3 x USB 2.0, i.LINK (IEEE 1394), and Fax modified ports
- NVIDIA GeForce4 Go 32MB Video RAM
- Internal Harman Kardon stereo speakers
- Integrated 10/100 and 10/100Base-TX Ethernet
- 1 Year carry-in International Limited Warranty (parts and labor)

P89,990

For warranty and technical support, please call 24x7 toll-free: 1800 162 1044.

Toshiba Dynamics, Inc.

intel inside pentium 4

Satellite

Choose freedom.

Destabilization? Poes won't have any of it—Susan

ACTOR Fernando Poe Jr., the main opposition presidential candidate, will not countenance any destabilization moves by his allies against the government of President Macapagal-Arroyo, his wife Susan Roces said yesterday.

"That is furthest from the mind of my husband," Roces said in Filipino in a phone interview after the Balintawak Fundraiser at his home in Quezon City this month.

"I know that FPJ's stand adheres to the law. All these years, we have respected the law," Roces added.

The actress accused the Macapagal administration of inventing a destabilization scenario to scare the people.

"It's a ghost they made that they themselves are now scared of," Roces said.

During her first visit to the Batasan last Monday, Roces declared that she knew in her heart that Poe had won the election.

Roces declined to answer questions on whether her family was prepared to accept defeat should Mr. Macapagal be declared the winner by Congress.

She said she and her husband were also impatient to know the results of the election based on the congressional canvass.

Roces reiterated that her family was not used to and will not be involved in exciting chaos.

"We are peaceful citizens. We want peaceful means," she said.

Asked whether she found the proceedings in Congress to be too slow, Roces said it was only right that the proposed rules be scrutinized in order to be credible to the people.

She also praised Iloilo Rep. Felix Oscar Oreta Jr. and Senate President Franklin Drilon for their composure for the President during the elections.

She said the four the two leaders could do more to allow legislators to ventilate their positions on the proposed canvassing rules. Carlo de Pablo

Noynoy eyes speakership

By Carlito Pablo

THE son of national martyr Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr. and former President Corazon Aquino is making the biggest move so far in his political career.

While Rep. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III (LP, Tarlac) did not receive a formal nod in the May 10 elections, the youngest Aquino has not pressed his candidacy to throw his hat into the speakership race in the House of Representatives.

A successful bid by Aquino would mean that he'll be following the footsteps of his grandfather Benigno Aquino, who served as Speaker of the House from 1943 to 1944.

In an interview, Aquino said members of the Liberal Party met Wednesday to discuss the plans of the party in the post-election period, including the holding of a bar for the speakership or the House, with him as its party candidate.

"I was open to the wishes of my party mates," said the 44-year-old bachelor.

About 31 reelected and newly elected LP congressmen are set to sit as members of the incoming 13th Congress.

"We want to become more effective members of the 13th Congress," says Jesus Aquino mentioned the LP's plan to run for the highest seat in the House.

"This is also in response to other colleagues in the House who are exploring the possibility of new alliances," Aquino elaborated.

Aquino was apparently referring to the earlier reported sentiments by incoming reelectionist Antonio Eduñas to install new leadership vice Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. (Lakas, Pangasinan).

"You might be surprised at the number of us who want to see a new leadership," Aquino said but he declined to elaborate.

With 31 members, the LP would have to convince new an alliance of at least 81 more congressmen from the other parties for a fighting chance for the speakership.

SPORTS

E-mail: pi_sports@inquirer.com.ph

Editor: Teddyvic S. Melendres
Assistant Editor: Edwin M. Villanueva

Marquez now wants a rematch

Mexican champ sings new tune, but Team Pacquiao has other plan

IN A major turnaround, World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation featherweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez now appears ready to face Manny Pacquiao in a much-anticipated rematch.

MARQUEZ: U-turn

"Marquez is ready, we're ready—we're waiting for the first available date HBO can give us," said Bob Arum, head of Top Rank which promotes Marquez, in an interview with popular Mexican boxing website Box.latino yesterday.

There has been a snowballing demand for a Pacquiao-Marquez rematch following their May 8 showdown in Las Vegas where Pacquiao dethroned Marquez three times in the first round before the Mexican rallied to keep his twin titles by salvaging a split-decision verdict.

Team Pacquiao earlier joined the clamor for a rematch after it was learned that one of the judges erred in scoring the first round of the match, but Marquez had quashed prospects for a second meeting with Pacquiao.

The Mexican said Pacquiao has to prove himself first against another champion fighter while he himself prepares for a defense of his IBF title.

Arum's announcement is expected to be welcomed by the Filipino fighter.

American cable TV giant Home Box Office, which owns the exclusive right to Pacquiao's future fights, has already lauded the Filipino ring icon for a fight in September "with any opponent we choose," revealed Top Rank manager Rod Nazareth.

However, no date has yet been firmed up.

Nazareth had earlier talked with Jin Sung Lee, the manager of World Boxing Council featherweight champion Injin Chi of South Korea, for a possible title fight in Manila.

Lee, a businessman who is a close friend of WBC Kyunghee secretary general Rudy Salud, had announced no less than a $1 million purse for his ward, but reports said he's willing to lower it to a run-free $700,000.

Also being considered to fight Pacquiao are WBC superbantam champ Oscar Larios and Mario Alonso Barrera, the Mexican boxing icon whom the Filipino humbled with an 11th-round stoppage last November in Texas.

Pacquiao gave up his IBF superbantam crown last January to concentrate on fighting in the heavier featherweight division.

Ashven L. Laguardia

WHAT'S INSIDE

Tagaytay
VILLA MENDEZ
Grand Open House
May 29-30
200-0191
www.villamendez.com.ph

FREE CABANA
with Purchase of Lakeside Farm Lot
OPEN HOUSE ON
MAY 29, 2004
For More Details Visit:
www.lakeside-farms.com
or Call: 407-6400/842-3011

NOTICE

ROXAS & ROXAS
LAW OFFICES

Unit 2009 Strata 100 Building,
Emerald Avenue, Ortigas Center
1605 Pasig City

DFA to probe HK vote fraud

By Jonathan Adolfo

THE DEPARTMENT of Foreign Affairs is willing to investigate allegations by presidential candidate Sen. Fidel V. Villanueva that consulate staff in Hong Kong were involved in fraud in the canceling members of the overseas absentee votes done.

"Show us the tape as we would have the facts. We are interested in checking it," foreign undersecretary for administration Franklin Ebdane said today in a press conference.

He said that as far as he knows, nobody has called the DFA's attention to any irregularity in the counting and canvassing of overseas absentee votes.

The counting of votes was conducted publicly and by special boards of election inspectors composed of three members each.

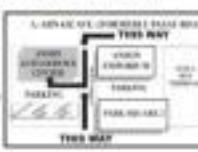
There were more than 80,000 registered voters in Hong Kong, a Chinese special administrative region.

No Income Tax for Out & Near Small Businesses!
No Money? No Job? Retiring?

BOHOL-CEBU TOUR
CEBU-MACTAN
BOHOL DISCOVERY

Where you find the best.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO .....
Anson Auto Service Center
NOW OPEN
WE PROUDLY INTRODUCE THE BEST AND MOST ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY IN AUTO MAINTENANCE EQUIPMENT AT LOWEST PRICES!
DRIVE IN FOR A CHECK-UP!
SEE THE DIFFERENCE AND FEEL THE RESULTS.
OPEN MONDAY TO SUNDAY



CATHAY BUILDER'S CENTER
BIG
ANNIVERSARY SALE
Celebrate our 25th Anniversary with us!
CATHAY BUILDERS CENTER
We're BIG on building.

BUILDERS' DEPOT
The Leading One-Stop Construction Shop
is now in LIBIS
FULLY AIRCONDITIONED
With 3 levels of parking space good for more than 200 cars
We are now:
BIGGER
BETTER
CLOSER
With 3 big Depots strategically located to serve you better.
NOW OPEN
A proud family of Wilcon Builder's Supply, Inc.

Loren cries 'dagdag-bawas'

By Carlos Pablo

THE CAMP of Sen. Loren Legarda yesterday said that a renewed evidence that the opposition tried to manipulate the presidential-vice presidential election was evidence of "daylight forensic [vote] padding and shaving" in an Iloan city municipality in Southern Mindanao.

The Legarda group said that she was in many of the 327 polling precincts in Alimbangan in the town of Balabagang but her votes were allegedly added to those of her rival, administration candidate Sen. Noli de Castro.

Ed Serrano, campaign manager of Legarda, said that instance was "evidence of vote-padding through false and manufactured entries in the statements of votes."

"The vote was apparently added to De Castro's when it was time to copy the election [data] to the PBs," Serrano said.

One sample cited was Precinct 0202 A of Barangay Poblacion where Legarda got 76 votes against De Castro's 24 in the EB.

"However, the votes in the SE for Precinct 0202 A showed De Castro with 176 votes and Legarda with only 24," Serrano said.

"However, the votes in the SE for Precinct 0202 A showed De Castro with 176 votes and Legarda with only 24," Serrano said.

ORIGINAL CANVASS EQUIPMENT
NOW For Only P39,500
Previously Priced @ P55,000
CLARION COMMERCIAL INCORPORATED

Don't Let ACNE Scar Your Son or Daughter —*for life*

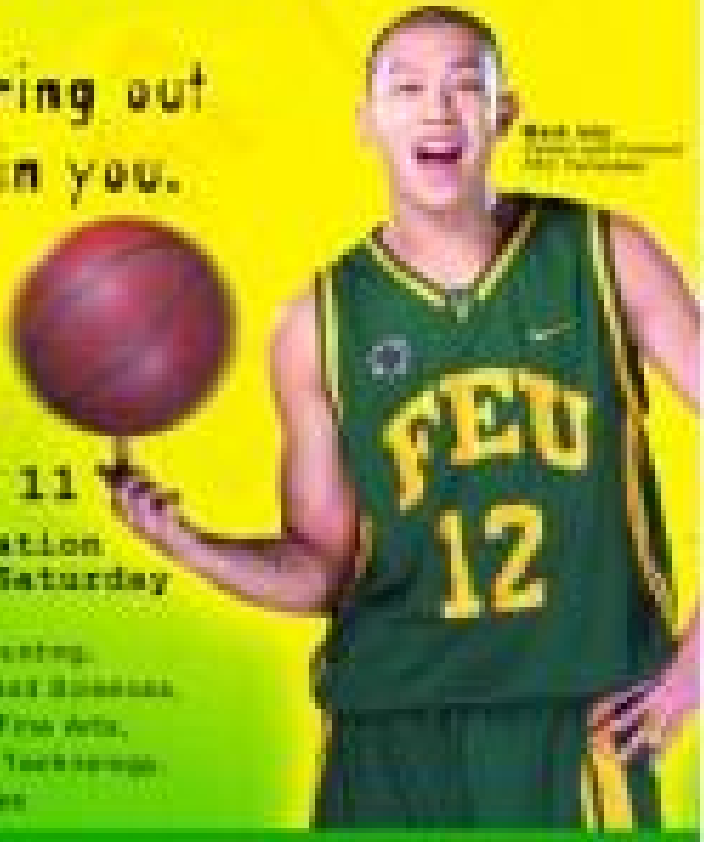
Act now — before it's too late!

nora de la rosa

FOR EASTERN UNIVERSITY

WINNERS ARE MADE. NOT BORN.

Let FEU bring out the BEST in you.



Enrollment until June 11

Entrance examination from Monday to Saturday

Courses in Nursing, Accounting, Business, Finance, Arts and Sciences, Education, Architecture, Fine Arts, Engineering, Information Technology, Law, and Graduate Studies

www.feu.edu.ph 736-0036 • 735-5621

THE BACK page of Just Shop, a magazine devoted to the Filipina woman shopper.

Just Shop, latest addition to PDI family

AUGUST. Not from your number 1 broadsheet.

The Philippine Daily Inquirer gave you the country's first free newspaper, Inquirer Libre.

It used new ink and trimmed its size to help the environment and to give more of a less scary (to most comfortable) reading.

The Inquirer also provided sections dedicated to the readers' favorite sports —basketball and golf.

Today, the Inquirer is introducing another innovation to the newspaper industry: Just Shop, the first grocery magazine supplement in the country.

This magazine is devoted to the Filipino women's most favorite pastime—shopping.

Just Shop is published every last Friday of the month and is given free to Inquirer subscribers in Metro Manila.

Style-savvy tips

Just Shop is made for outgoing and passionate women who aspire for a more stylish lifestyle. It features fabulous choices of clothes, accessories and beauty products. It highlights the season's most desirable pieces, new stores, shopping destinations and style-savvy tips. It is crafted to serve as your personal shopper and stylist.

Shopping guru

Just Shop is led by the celebrity stylist and must-hire shopaholic, Jessie Lippercot. Of course, the Inquirer set aside early for anybody less than the fashion and shopping guru herself.

If you want to be an Inquirer advertiser, call 928.0333 or 527.2333.

St. Luke's

is the First and Only Hospital in the Philippines Accredited by JOINT COMMISSION INTERNATIONAL

And the Second in Asia

After 2 years of rigorous preparation and an extensive week-long on-site survey, St. Luke's has been granted the highly coveted accreditation by JCI, the most prestigious and trusted name in healthcare accreditation in the world.

JCI is a subsidiary of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), the oldest and largest healthcare accrediting body in the U.S. dedicated to improving the quality of care.

International Standards of Healthcare

With Joint Commission International accreditation, St. Luke's continuously strives for the highest level of performance possible, improve patient outcomes, and creates an environment for continuous improvement.

Joint Commission standards focus on areas that most directly impact patient care. These areas are: access to care, continuity of care, patient and family rights and education, assessment of patients, care of patients, quality improvement and patient safety, prevention and control of infections, governance, leadership and direction, facility management and safety, staff qualifications and education, and management of information.

The Value of Accreditation

Accreditation engages all hospital personnel from its governing board to its medical, administrative, and support staff in a cooperative effort to continuously improve patient care.

St. Luke's is now the first and only JCI accredited hospital in the Philippines and the second in Asia. However, the process is a continuing journey towards excellent quality healthcare. St. Luke's must maintain the international healthcare quality standards and quality improvement process and subject itself to on-site surveys every three years to maintain accreditation.

Achieving JCI accreditation places St. Luke's with an elite group of healthcare providers worldwide. Demonstrating that not only does it provide high quality care but it is also committed to continuously improving the quality of care.

World Class Accreditation. World Class Healthcare.

Joint Commission INTERNATIONAL

St. Luke's Medical Center

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, May 21, 2004
7th Week of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 25:13-21
Gospel: John 21:15-19

After Jesus said his disciples had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." And Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

A second time Jesus said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" And Peter answered, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Look after my sheep." And a third time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was saddened because Jesus asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said, "Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you."

Jesus then said, "Feed my sheep. Truly I say to you, when you were young you put on your belt and walked where you liked. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and another will put a belt around you and lead you where you do not wish to go."

Jesus said this to make known the kind of death by which Peter was to glorify God. And he added, "follow me."

Commentary:

Peter was not able to say to Jesus few, openly on that occasion. But he understood friendship. Friendship is the best substitute for agape. It is a deep attachment to Jesus. "I have called you friends," Jesus said (Jn 15:15).

Gordon once said that when our friends are with us we don't think the same of them as when they are absent. This, he said, is because "absent friends are eternally and they exist only in your head" whereas the friends who are present have individualities of their own." This is a sharp insight into the brittleness of friendship: it can be cultivated and even swallowed up by the ego. I may love my friends only as long as they love me unchanged until we outgrow our self image. "No medicine is more valuable than a friend," said St. Ambrose of Hercules. But what if my friend makes a diagnosis that shows I'm not so?

Perhaps it comes to this: I must be secure here solely and quickly the ego begins to deny the independent existences of the other person, turning him or her into a function of myself. I must realize it is the other person's difference from me that will teach me and challenge me and let me out of my egocentrism. But at that point, friendship is already becoming agape.

Claretian Publications, P. O. Box 4-9, 1050 Quezon City, Phil. Tel. 921-2780 loc. 301-303; Fax 921-2780 loc. 304. E-mail: claret@cnl.net; Website: http://www.claret.org.ph/claretian Publications is a non-commercial apostolate of the Claretian Missionaries.

Abalos won't quit over count 'leak'

By Martin F Manlí

COMMISSION on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos is not quitting.

Amid fresh calls for his impeachment and for him to step down, this time involving the alleged "leak" that President Macapagal-Arroyo had won over opposition front-runner Fernando Poe Jr. by about a million votes in the May 10 poll, there are no signs that Abalos is giving up.

Yesterday Abalos reiterated that there was nothing secret in the canvassing of votes for senator and party-list groups which certificates of canvass (COC) also contained votes for president and vice president.

"If you are resourceful, you would know. Kung gusto nalin sa akin, kuha sa separate sheet [If we want it secret, the results should be placed in a separate sheet]," he said.

Abalos told reporters that it was impossible to hide the poll results since all representatives from different parties had access to the CoCs. He added that the parties and the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections had copies of the election returns from the precinct level and knew the results of presidential and vice-presidential elections.

Abalos maintained that "there was nothing to leak" contrary to allegations by the opposition.

Asked if the statistics of votes by Congress would be a matter for nullity, the Comelec chief said he would rather not comment on it.

No SC ruling yet on Church support

By Philip C. Tubeza

RELIGIOUS leaders who endorsed candidates in the last elections are not yet off the hook, the head of the party-list group that raised the issue before the courts said yesterday.

Jesnover Akmatona, head of advocates and adherents of Social Justice for School Teachers and Allied Workers (ANSAT), said the Supreme Court would still rule on the issue of whether religious endorsements violate the constitutional provision on the separation of Church and State.

Akmatona pointed out that the high court had required presidential candidates evangelist Bro. Eddie Villanueva and the Commission on Elections to give their sides on his [Akmatona's] petition seeking Villanueva's disqualification from the presidential race.

"The vote to be taken [on Villanueva] was endorsing himself. He was not only endorsing others, he was endorsing himself," Akmatona said.

The high court on April 28 struck down due to administrative technical flaws a Manila court ruling which said that endorsements by religious leaders violated the Constitution.

On Tuesday, the high court dismissed with finality Akmatona's motion for reconsideration of the case.

But Akmatona said the full court had taken cognizance of his petition against Villanueva, whom Akmatona had "clothed disqualified because his candidacy allegedly violated the separation of Church and State."

"Hopefully, the issue [of religious endorsement] would be passed upon by the court in this case," Akmatona said.

He said the high court had ordered Villanueva and the Comelec to comment on his petition on May 8.

"[The justices] could have immediately dismissed the petition [against Villanueva for being moot] but they didn't. Many justices are interested in this issue of religious endorsements," Akmatona said.

Akmatona said the issue should be resolved with finality since the May 10 elections highlighted the growing influence of religious groups in the country's political affairs.

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Gozo

Sadr offers US deal to end Najaf battles

NAJAF, Iraq—Shiite Muslim radical leader Moqtada Sadr has offered to withdraw his fighters from the Iraqi holy city of Najaf if the United States pulls out its forces as part of a deal to end weeks of bitter fighting.

In a signed statement, Sadr also called for the postponement of legal proceedings against him over his alleged role in the murder of a rival cleric and called for a "broad discussion" on the future of his Mehdi Army militia.

A truce has been called to allow for negotiations to continue between the two sides, according to a senior Shiite cleric.

Sadr's statements, read to AFP by Iraqi national security adviser Mowaffaq al-Rubaie, followed Wednesday's arrest of one of Sadr's key lieutenants, Ayad al-Nuri, and appeared to mark a climbdown on his earlier pledge to lead his followers to martyrdom.

There was no immediate comment from the US-led coalition in Iraq, but officials in Washington hailed the move as a "significant achievement" to end weeks of fighting that have left hundreds of militiamen dead.

Sadr's uprising started nearly two months ago after coalition civil administrator Paul Bremer ordered the closure of his newspaper and forces moved to enforce longstanding arrest warrants against him and several key followers.

The US military said that it wanted to kill or capture Sadr who is wanted in connection with the killing in April 2003 of Abdel Majid al-Khoei, a moderate pro-US cleric.

US commanders also demanded the disbanding of the Mehdi Army and hundreds of its militiamen were killed in fierce fighting with coalition troops in Shiite districts across central and southern Iraq.

In his signed statement, Sadr said he had agreed to a four point plan "to put an end to the tragic situation in Najaf and the violation of the sanctity of the sacred shrine of Imam Ali" which was damaged during the clashes.

He said he had agreed to withdraw his followers from government buildings and to pull out all Mehdi Army fighters from Najaf, except those who lived in the city, to pave the way for the return for Iraqi security forces.

He also called for the withdrawal of occupation forces "to their bases" except for a small number to protect coalition buildings and the provincial governor's office.

"We agreed to a truce so that negotiations can start their work," said Sheikh Mohammed Yaacoubi, secretary general of the Islamic Action Organization, which has been trying to broker a ceasefire for weeks. "The two parties agreed," he added.

Speaking in Najaf, Yaacoubi said: "American forces promised to reply on Thursday to a plan put forward by negotiators to resolve the crisis."

Washington has dispatched a member of the US Congress to take part in the negotiations, he added.

"We believe that Moqtada Sadr will also nominate a negotiator," Yaacoubi said, adding that his group had suggested that UN and British representatives also take part in the talks.

In Washington, a senior US official said: "They appear to have peacefully resolved the situations in Najaf, Kufa and Karbala. This is a significant achievement."

A second US official said the ceasefire agreement "resulted from the efforts of the Shia clergy to convince Sadr to stop the fighting."

Sheikh Ahmed al-Shaibani, of Sadr's office in Najaf, confirmed there was a truce but said there was not yet an agreement between the two sides.

"We are prepared to remove all armed presence from the holy cities if the American side does the same," he said, refusing to give any timeframe.

"There are very serious efforts this time to solve the crisis but nothing official has occurred yet."

Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi, a Sadr representative in the southern city of Amara, said: "There is no withdrawal until they fulfil our conditions, namely that US troops withdraw from inside Najaf." AFP

AN ARMED Iraqi Shiite militiaman stands guard over a portrait of radical cleric Moqtada Sadr in the Iraqi holy city of Najaf, May 23. REUTERS

AI: Terror war 'bereft of principle'

LONDON—Washington's global answer to bullets was "bankrupt of vision" as human rights become sacrificed to the blind pursuit of security, rights group Amnesty International charged on Wednesday.

Amnesty also rapped partners across the world in the US-declared "war on terror" for jailing suspects unfairly, stamping on legitimate political and religious dissent and squeezing asylum-seekers.

"The global security agenda pursued by the US administration is bankrupt of vision and bereft of principle," Amnesty head Irene Khan said, launching the group's annual report.

"Violating rights at home, turning a blind eye to abuses abroad and using preemptive military force where and when it chooses has damaged justice and freedom, and made the world a more dangerous place."

Specifically, Amnesty listed Washington for unlawful killings of Iraqi civilians, questionable arrest and mistreatment of prisoners in Iraq, Guantanamo Bay and Afghanistan; and opposition to a new global criminal court.

"The world is crying out for principled leadership," Khan said, saying the negative effects of US-led antiterror policies had spread far and wide.

"Governments are losing their moral compass, sacrificing the global values of human rights in a blind pursuit of security."

In Europe and Asia, Amnesty criticized repressive antiterror legislation, attacks on refugee protection and restrictions on freedom of association and expression.

US state department spokesperson Richard Boucher rejected Amnesty's overall arguments, saying Washington continued to defend human rights around the world and to raise abuses with governments, including close US allies.

"In the same vein... we do take Amnesty's report seriously, we look at what they say, we look at specific cases they raise and make sure that we are doing what we can for the people who might be hurt by harmful practices around the world," he said.

Amnesty singled out Britain for holding 14 foreigners without charge, Spain for closing a Basque-language newspaper, the European Union for ignoring human rights on asylum, and Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan for internal repression.

In China, India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Thailand "the belief... that human rights could be curtailed under the 'war on terror' umbrella was particularly apparent," with hundreds of detainees left in legal limbo, Amnesty's report said.

Arab nations also came in for criticism for allowing the transfer of people between states without judicial proceedings. Reuters

AMERICA'S 'GOOD WAR' Crossed rifles in the sand are a comrade's tribute to this American soldier who sprang ashore from a landing barge and died at the barricades of Western Europe in this 1944 file photo. Russian President Vladimir Putin, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and US President George W. Bush will visit Normandy, France, to mark the 60th anniversary of D-Day on June 6, 2004. REUTERS

EU, LatAm nations slam Iraq prisoner abuse

GUADALAJARA, Mexico—European Union and Latin American nations agreed late Wednesday to condemn the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by US soldiers, a top Mexican official said.

In a draft declaration, to be signed at a summit between the two regions on Friday, countries a paragraph that "confirmes and expresses the consternation of the region with respect to the torture of human beings and prisoners of war, and there is a specific mention of the recent events in Iraq," Lourdes Dieck, Mexico's deputy secretary of economic relations and international cooperation, told reporters.

US soldiers have been accused of sexually abusing and humiliating detainees at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

The delegates have struggled with whether to include a specific mention of the prison abuse. Earlier Wednesday, Brazil's ambassador to the European Union, Jose Alfredo Graca Lima, told reporters it appeared that officials were watering down the proposal by taking out a specific reference to Abu Ghraib prison.

Delegates to 55 countries were also still wrangling over the details of free-trade agreements between the EU and countries belonging to the Mercosur customs union, as well as how to launch trade negotiations with Andean and Central American nations, Dieck said.

The European Union is weighing the chances of signing a free trade accord with Mercosur countries Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay by October. The agreement could help the World Trade Organization end its stalemated round of trade liberalization talks.

It would cover agricultural trade—an issue the United States has banned from its stuttering drive for a Free Trade Area of the Americas, leading Latin American nations to boost trade ties with Europe.

EU officials and Mercosur trade ministers are scheduled to meet Thursday, a week after each side offered concessions to keep talks going. Officials gave no details but sounded optimistic a deal could be reached by October, as planned.

Mercosur and EU business leaders said Wednesday a total liberalization of trade in "the top competitive products" could generate $3.7 billion. AP

Sudan, rebs sign deals to end 21 years of war

NAIROBI, Kenya—Sudan's government and rebel group on Wednesday signed accords that are crucial to ending 21 years of devastating civil war in the south of the east country.

The three protocols signed by Khartoum and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army on power-sharing and the administration of three disputed areas are the two years of tortuous political negotiations in Kenya and leave only technical and military aspects of a ceasefire standing in the way of a comprehensive peace accord.

Kenyan chief mediator Lazarus Sumbeiywo said both sides had pledged to deliver this by late June or mid-July.

The Kenyan talks, however, did not cover the western region of Darfur, where a separate conflict that began in February 2003 has created what the United Nations has described as the world's worst humanitarian crisis, leaving hundreds of thousands of people at risk of starvation and about a million displaced.

Nevertheless, Wednesday's signing, which took place at a lakeside hotel near the western Kenyan town of Naivasha, prompted a cacophony of cheers and ululations from hundreds of Sudanese refugees.

"This indeed is a momentous occasion in the history of our country," declared SPLA leader John Garang.

"We have reached the crest of the last hill in our ascent to the heights of peace... there are no other hills. I believe what remains is 'fat pressed'," he said.

"Things will never and can never be the same in Sudan," he proclaimed.

His supervising counterpart, Sudanese vice president Ali Osman Taha, said: "This is a day for Sudan, for peace, development and stability."

"It's our duty in Sudan to put these words into action with the same degree of determination in order to succeed," he added.

"This is a victory not only for the people of Sudan ... but also for the entire continent," Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki said in a speech delivered on his behalf by Foreign Minister Kalonzo Musyoka.

"These agreements represent a monumental step forward and testify to the desire of all the people of Sudan to unite in their diversity," he added.

"Tonight you have made history with this courageous step," said Richard O'Brien, Ireland's ambassador to Egypt, speaking on behalf of the European Union.

"Both sides have reaffirmed their commitment to them to negotiate peace," he added.

The latest phase of Sudan's longrunning civil war has pitted the SPLA, which the south, where most observe traditional religions and Christianity, each up across several dimensions and marginalisation by the wealthier, Islamic and Arabised north.

Together with extensive famine and disease, UNICEF's longest estimate has declared at least 1.5 million lives and displaced more than four million people, mostly in the impoverished south.

Much of the country's west agreed more than 10 hours later than scheduled, as Taha and Garang haggled over the distribution of jobs in post-war institutions.

Those keep sensing included Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki and Sudan's Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, and further afield, such as US Acting assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Charles Snyder. AFP

TENS of thousands of people line up to see one of Buddha's fingers, top, which is shielded in a bullet-proof glass box at Hong Kong's convention centre, May 27. Beijing flew the finger to Hong Kong on Wednesday, where locals were celebrating the Buddha's birthday, for a temporary display that critics call a cynical gesture to score political points.

Thousands queue to see Buddha's finger

HONG KONG—Tens of thousands of people are lining up to see one of Buddha's fingers, and although they've being herded pass in a hurry many said Thursday it's offering Hong Kong fresh hopes for peace and calm.

Thousands of visitors were signed more than 10 hours later than scheduled, as Taha and Garang haggled over the distribution of jobs in post-war institutions.

Those keep sensing included Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki and Sudan's Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, and further afield, such as US Acting assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Charles Snyder. AFP

Step One Property Builders, Inc.
Brokers and Agents are Welcome

Dominican Republic, Haiti death toll from floods approach 2,000

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—The death toll from devastating floods and landslides in Haiti and the Dominican Republic has risen to at least 1,950 on Wednesday with the discovery of more than 1,000 bodies in a Haitian town.

The toll rose dramatically when the bodies were found in Mapou, a small settlement in Haiti's mountains where communications are poor, said Marguerite Martin, the head of the civil protection office for Haiti's Southeast region.

Rescue workers dug through mud and debris but bodies three days after torrential rains sent down of mud and swirling waters through Dajaunbis, the Caribbean island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Haiti's toll stood at 1,660, including 1,000 in Mapou, 500 elsewhere in Haiti's South-east region, 154 in the riverside town of Fond Verettes, and two in the south, in Port-a-Piment.

Authorities in the neighboring Dominican Republic said they had recovered 300 bodies, mostly from the disaster in Jimani near the Haitian border, where a river overflowed its banks before dawn and swept homes away as people slept.

In Haiti, image from a US-led reconnaissance flight from Miami showed a mile of knitted water, mud and brush in the town of Fond Verette, where the storm crashed on the winding mountainside road from Port-au-Prince and cut off ground transportation to the southern coast.

The floodwaters flattened fields of crops and ripped apart entire shacks, fashioned from sticks and sheets of tin.

Residents pulled mattresses and other clothing bags from the waters, where they had been swept by the flood, and assembled small, cabled possessions in trucks along the sides of the roads.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas where days of precipitation of 8 million struggles for food and shelter. Four out of five people live in poverty and only a quarter of Haitians has access to safe drinking water.

The peacekeeping force, numbering about 3,500 foreign troops, was sent to Haiti to try to contain order after an armed revolt forced out former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to Miramar, the latest chapter in a long history of political upheaval in the country.

Aristide's successor, Haitian President Bigelow Mejia declared a day of national mourning for Thursday.

In the devastated Dominican town of Jimani, bodies were taken to a morgue and Juan Lagos Estepello, a lake where cars had been swept by the raging waters. Corpses were found entangled against walls, clinging to tree trunks and buried in the mud.

Dozens of soldiers and firefighters were sent to join the recovery effort. Relief workers were surprised made against the stench of decomposing flesh and limited hopes on rescuers, while rescuers found the bodies of children stacked with hundreds search-ing for corpses.

Many were buried in mass common graves. Authorities warned about diseases breaking out because water left rotting corpses.

Bulldozers dug holes to bury others where they were found, in ground where buildings stood a few days ago. Reuters

Nordic raids net 350 linked to child porn

STOCKHOLM—Police in the Nordic countries said Wednesday they had seized hundreds of thousands of photos and films in the region's largest ever child pornography raid, which netted about 350 people including police officers and schoolteachers.

Police in Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway handed the raids on Tuesday after tracing several e-mail members used to buy child pornography online and unwitting abuse of life-swapping services on the Internet, where suspects appeared to have traded pornographic material depicting children.

According to media reports, the suspects were aged from 19 to 70, and came from a range of ethnic and social backgrounds.

In Sweden, three policemen figured among the suspects, while at least two schoolteachers were targeted in Norway, where arrests were still being made on Wednesday.

Most of the people arrested—many of whom have admitted to possessing the illegal photographs, amounting to pictures—had been released by Wednesday pending prosecution.

Officers were examining the seized materials in an attempt to identify children depicted in them, and later asked the international police agency Interpol for help.

Police said there was nothing to the victims' knowledge, but many had produced child pornography themselves, but said that a number of digital cameras had been confiscated.

The raid agency dare the Old, drive to Norway said that local children may have been depicted in some of the photographs.

"Sometimes it's the case that people put their own pictures on the Internet to exchange for access to other people's," Interpol's No. 2 in command's Stockmar Bergen told Norwegian news agency NTB.

Bergen also said that identifying the children from and in films and photographs would prove a difficult task, since such pictures are often taken in a way to make identification almost impossible. AFP

KABUKI DANCE
Kabuki actor Nakamura Tokio performs a classical dance at a Tokyo theater May 27. Kabuki, which means sing, dance and skill, is a traditional form of Japanese theater in which all roles, including those depicting women, are performed by men. REUTERS

Now Open
Cravings
THE COFFEE BEANERY
Mabolo/Ayala Commercial Complex, Nicolas Avenue, Ortigas, Pasig City
(Formerly Pajama na Pasig) Tel. No. 633-6888
www.cravingspasig.com

Fat Americans told: Turn off TV, eat smart

WASHINGTON—Increasingly overweight Americans should cut off the TV, get some exercise and eat "a wide variety of foods," a panel of dietary experts said on Wednesday, giving mild dietary advice for high-protein diets.

The 11-member panel, commissioned to update the Dietary Guidelines for Americans—the government's rubber for healthful eating—told Americans need to balance food intake with their activity level to avoid gaining weight.

Two-thirds of US adults are overweight and childhood obesity is fuelling. Poor diet and physical inactivity, blamed for 400,000 deaths a year, may soon overtake smoking as the No. 1 cause of preventable death.

In a session called to wrap up their suggestions for the new edition of the guidelines, panelists agreed "a wide variety of foods," including fruits, vegetables, grains, milk products and meat and poultry, as the "cornerstone" of a healthy nutrient recommendations.

After assessing nutrition research, the advisory committee planned to write its version of the new guidelines Thursday.

Chair Janet Cog, who is senior scientist at Oakland Children Hospital Research Institute, said another meeting would be called if consensus was elusive.

The new guidelines are due for release in January.

"Eating leaner meat, all nutritious, especially children and adolescents, should limit their sedentary behaviors such as TV watching and video viewing," the panel said. Reuters

Assistant Editor Tony Gargoles

Across the NATION

NPAs raid Pampanga police station

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—In less than 10 minutes and without firing a shot, 20 armed men claiming to be New People's Army rebels raided the police station at the Barangay Sindalan here on Wednesday night, and fled with five M-16 rifles and a 9-mm pistol.

Three rebels barged into the station at 9:35 p.m., threw crude pipe-bombs and fired shots at the police station in 10 minutes, police said.

One rebel ordered the police-man-on-duty, SPO4 Pedro Isreal, to lie face down on the floor. Another rebel, while destroying the two-way radio station and the telephone, looked out loud, "Don't fight it is not serious. We are NPA."

Three rebels then commandeered the van of Senior Insp. Reynaldo Lamangan, the station commander, and other lechers.

Aside from the rifles, a cellular phone was also reported taken.

The group fled using a gray van without any plate number, according to Dionisio, citing the accounts of bystanders.

"A special operations team of the NPA carried out this not serious operations," Senior Supt. Rodolfo Mendoza, Pampanga provincial police chief, said of the attack.

Mendoza, a contributor, of about 2,000 families displaced by the Mt. Pinatubo eruptions, in area of Mexico town, where in several villages rebel factions still operate.

The said, Mendoza said, indicated that local guerrillas have begun their "renewed tactical offensives in urban areas."

On May 23, Dec 909, rebels killed a police intelligence agent and wounded another in an ambush in Pozorrubio.

Lamangan, David and two other policemen who were supposed to have reported for the night shift, SPO2 Ricardo Panaligan and PCO Zagala Mandapat, were released and rescued from leaving the provincial police camp as investigation began on Thursday.

In Argao, Cebu, the rebels suffered a setback with the arrest of an encoding guerrilla leaders.

Maj. Reynan Zuniega, spokesperson of the Central Command based here, identified the two as Ronald Jacobaya also known as "Ka-ngaw" and Jigger Lovencio alias "Paris."

Jacobaya, who reportedly hails from Indanan town in Sulu, was allegedly the secretary of the NPA Front 2, which is based in mid-northern Cebu.

Lovencio, on the other hand, was secretary of the NPA Front 1, which covers Cebu's north towns, according to the military.

Zuniega said a team composed of policemen and Army soldiers arrested the two NPA leaders at about 11:30 p.m. on Wednesday. Read Dr. Orgeo, PDI Central Luzon Desk with a report by Roanne Rapadas-un, PDI Pangan Bureau

Trader hunted for kidnapping

BACOOD CITY—Police are looking for a lone gunman believed to be the head of a gang that kidnapped and killed a Chinese-Filipino businessman here in March this year.

The National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Makaki) said Fred "Boxie" Lopsley Jumbid, 29, is the leader of the Bangis Gang that kidnapped Teddy Bagayan Lee on March 18. Lee's decomposing body was found on May 17 along Halsema Highway in Asin, Benguet.

A regional trial court in La Trinidad, Benguet, also included Jumbid in the kidnap-murder charge filed against seven suspects who were at-large but for the police.

Businessman

Lee, whose family has huge stakes in real estate and construction businesses in Baguio and La Trinidad, was abducted last March 18 at Shiao Subdivision here.

Makaki officials presented last week the suspects: Jefferson Ab-Abay, 25; Eddie Bugan, 22; Bobby Pokpoking, 24; Jayson Alegbeyan, 20; and Cromwell Labo-Ding, 25; all of Mt. Province.

Two other suspects, Raymund Dewa-ey, 26, and Gaston Sarol, 25, were later arrested in Mt. Province.

The suspects had pointed to a certain "Kun Bunin," who turned out to be Jumbid, a police source said.

Jumbid is a native of Bontoc, Mt. Province and his last known residence was Upper Pinget here and Km 21 in Tublay, Benguet.

Botched

The source said Jumbid financed what turned out to be a botched kidnapping.

One of the suspects admitted last week that Lee was killed a few hours after he was abducted when he fought with the kidnappers.

Another suspect said they let Lee with a machete. Where they disposed of his body the suspects said that they were their separate ways.

Jumbid, however, kept on negotiating with Lee's family members and even asked for P500,000 from them but nonetheless.

Jumbid is a native of Bontoc, Mt. Province and his last known residence was Upper Pinget here and Km 21 in Tublay, Benguet.

Tricycle drivers seek fare hike

By Joey A. Gabieza
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—An association composed of about 4,000 tricycle drivers in the city is seeking a P1 increase in fare to offset their losses following the series of increases in fuel prices.

The Federation of Tricycle Drivers and Operators Produced filed a petition for fare increase on Tuesday before the committee of franchising and transport regulation of the city council.

Victor Aguilar Jr., federation president, said they had to file the petition because the series of increases in oil prices have also triggered an adjustment in the cost of motor parts and accessories.

He also pointed out that the drivers' daily income is P350 but about 60 percent of the amount is spent on the fuel. On top of this, he added, they have to pay daily rental of P150 for the tricycle.

Whatever meager amounts left is spent on their family's basic needs, said Aguilar.

If their petition is approved, the tricycle fare in the city will increase from P4 to P5 regardless of the distance provided it is within the city proper.

Tricycle is the main mode of transportation in Tacloban City. Records at the City's Licensing Office showed that about 1,500 units are plying the city's streets.

The number does not include the so-called "colorum" tricycles, or those that operate without any permit from the city.

Councilor Wilson Uy, committee chair of the franchising and regulatory, said he would set a public hearing on the federation's petition.

But Aguilar said he was "hopeful" that their petition would be approved because it had been four years since they were granted an increase.

In 2000, the federation filed a petition for a P1 increase in fare, which the city council approved.

Jimmy Dedeniz, city administrator for his part, said the tricycle drivers "deserve an increase" because the fuel prices had gone up several times.

Miners in Cordillera suffering from hearing defects, says doc

BAGUIO CITY—Most miners in the Cordillera are suffering from hearing disability, according to a doctor who conducted a research on persons with disability in the region.

Dr. Rosanna Abacin, chief of the regional Department of Health's People with Disability affairs, said his research, conducted in December last year in mining communities in Benguet, showed that many miners suffer from hearing defects due to the effects of blasting in underground tunnels.

Although mining companies allow ear protectors to their workers during blasting operations, Abacin said many miners refuse to use them.

He said hearing defect is the third leading disability in the Cordillera.

Abacin said workers in industrial camps and people living close to airports were also observed to be suffering from hearing defects.

Vim Fajilan, former personnel manager of the Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. (LCMC) and now executive assistant to the LCMC resident manager in Mankayan, Benguet, said their company always ensures that their workers use ear mufflers during blasting operations.

Fajilan, however, admitted that some workers refuse to use muffers because they do not feel comfortable using them. He said miners involved in blasting operations position themselves several meters from the blast site to protect themselves.

"We have many miners who have retired from the company but some of them had complained of suffering from hearing defects," Fajilan told the Inquirer in a telephone interview.

He said their miners are divided in three shifts to do an eight-hour workload in underground tunnels. Each shift does blasting operations only once, Fajilan said.

A former official of a mining company in Benguet said mine mining firms do not provide protective gears to miners since the workers are required to stay away from the blast site during the explosion.

The source said mining companies are also required to conduct annual physical examination for its employees, particularly the miners, to make sure that they are physically fit to work in underground tunnels. Jhoanne Carlson, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

STREET WORK
An unidentified worker puts reflectorized yellow lines on the streets of Davao City.

ELECTION 2004

Abra mayoral race hanging

By Avila Kira Paredes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

TINEG, Abra—While the winners in the mayoral races in 26 towns of Abra have been proclaimed, this town is still clueless on who won the mayoral post in the last elections.

Reelectionist Mayor Alberto Crisologo and his rival, Tony Bonoan, have both asked for special elections in three precincts here.

Will Bonoan regain the top post that his father and brother held for more than 40 years or will Crisologo finally get a second in that role?

Election returns from Cagayaan were questioned by Bonoan while those from Bolaat were questioned by Crisologo. The returns from Lineg were questioned by both parties.

Both have accused each other of vote padding for during the elections.

In Abra's election history, Tineg has always been the last to hold elections and its mayoral post has been one of the most contested.

Only the winning vice mayoral candidate has been proclaimed.

The Comelec has yet to decide on whether to hold special elections in the three contested areas.

At the provincial level, there has been no proclamation of the winners of the provincial board of District 1. Josilo Diaz and Yolanda Flores have questioned the election returns from Pidigan and Manabo towns, respectively.

In Baguio City, the Comelec in the Cordillera asked Dante Benjamin Mailee on Thursday to hold a second special election for a Kalinga town after its members reportedly decided to dispense with a repeat election last week.

Voters from Tinglayan town had physically prevented the board of election inspectors (BEI) there from setting up the first special elections that the Comelec had authorized, said lawyer Armando Velasco, Comelec Cordillera director.

In allowing the holding of the special elections on May 22, the Comelec cited the May 11 theft of several ballot boxes belonging to Barangays Dananao, Talgao East, Talgao West and Budno by armed men identified with a losing mayoral candidate.

Velasco said the BEI's inability to deliver the ballots to seven precincts of the four villages constituted a second failure of election in that area or town. This has disturbed the Comelec, he said. With a report from Florid Cabreza, PDI North Luzon Bureau

9 poll cases filed at House

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal has received at least nine cases of electoral protests as of Thursday, one of its senior members, Pampanga Rep. Oscar Rodriguez, said.

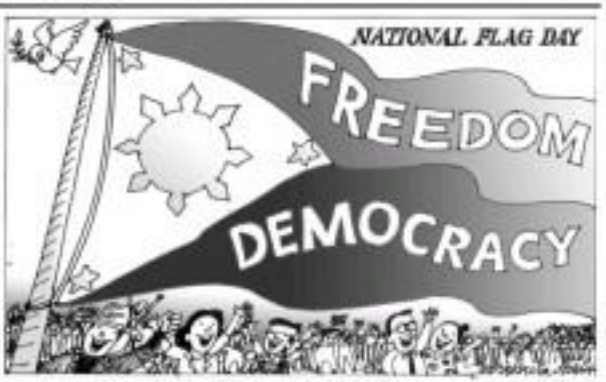
These cases involved Cadiz Gabalfin Jr. against Leo Rogelio in the first district of Agusan del Norte; Romero Gamboa against Del de Guzman in the lone district of Marikina City; Teodoro Cruz Jr. against former Speaker Arnulfo Fuentebella in the third district of Camarines Norte; and Zenaida Angeles against Miles Andrew Marie Nocos in the third district of Manila; Leonardo Roman against Albert Garcia in the second district of Batanes; Judgelo Reyes Jr. against Luis Villaverde in the second district of Camarines Sur; Florencio San Juan against former Environment Secretary Antonio Cerilles in the second district of Zamboanga del Sur; Benemerito Ceron Jr. against Sultanate Mangudadatu in Sultan Kudarat; and Rolando Jun Miguel against Leonardo Dy in the lone district of Puerto City.

The number of cases filed this year is fewer compared to the 68 cases the HRET received after the 2001 elections.

Disputes raised to the HRET usually take one year to be resolved, Rodriguez said, adding that those without merit are immediately dismissed. Timothy Dwight, PDI Central Luzon Bureau

INQUIRER

OPINION



Food and safety

THE PHILIPPINES and other terrorism-prone Asian nations are investing already scarce resources on checking the terrorist menace, but another menace is stalking the continent and it's a killer that could dwarf the tally of victims of al-Qaida and Jemaah Islamiyah. It's the terrorist that goes by the name of food-borne disease.

According to a United Nations conference on food safety in Malaysia recently, more than

EDITORIALS 700,000 people die every year from consuming contaminated food and water in the Asia Pacific. The number of victims of food-borne diseases was called "staggering" by a UN official.

Even the avian flu, otherwise known as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), while not food-borne, has some connection with food handling. "The danger of food-related outbreaks is particularly acute in Asia and the Pacific, because of the instances in which animals and people live in proximity and the way in which some food is produced and distributed," said an official of the World Health Organization.

Despite its alarming effects, the epidemic seems to be under-reported when taken in the context of deaths and sickness as a result of contamination. The Malaysian conference reported mass deaths of babies after they consumed adulterated milk in China as well as other unusual cases resulting from poor food handling and preparation as well as unsanitary ways.

In the Philippines, deaths as a result of poorly prepared food for the young are not rare. They fill the headlines of every morning paper and every afternoon newscast. Reports of food poisoning come as regularly as the daily weather bulletin. Deaths due to gastro-enteritis and severe bouts of diarrhea and dysentery are so everywhere as water, water everywhere.

The frequency of the incidence of food- or water-borne diseases has made public policymakers and the people quite complacent about the dangers that lack of food safety poses on the general population. In contrast, high-profile terrorist attacks, quite glamorous and media-genic, have compelled the government to launch and invest heavily on what it calls the war against terrorism.

Meanwhile, protocols and investments to ensure food safety have been neglected. The Malaysian conference should remind the government that it has other priorities as well that, while not as headline-grabbing as the threat of terrorism, are just as alarming and debilitating.

Security officials worry about the possibility of terrorist poisoning of our waters. But as the tale of the tape shows, our food and water could be poisoned without any help from the terrorists. It would just take ignorance and criminal neglect of safety and security to wipe away our population. And that is perhaps the real terrorism.

Trash and safety

TO ENSURE sanitation and safety, perhaps policy planners and managers should come together to check the foremost sanitary problem of Metro Manila: Manila's unenviable status as the trash catch-basin of the metropolis.

That status has been magnified again now that the rains have come. Manila's creeks have been clogged by garbage, worsening the flood situation that seems get worse as a city that is, after all, below sea level. The great Pasig River, whose mouth is in Manila, is a sordid confession of trash and more trash.

Metropolitan planners often point to Manila's geographic location and terrain as the reasons for its sanitary woes. But they overlook what has been the chief problem all along: the failure of planners and governments in other Metro Manila towns and cities around and above Manila to clear their creeks, improve their sanitation, and construct their own flood-control systems. The unprecedented development of areas around Manila has attracted people and businesses, but local governments have not responded well to new needs for public works to improve sanitation, sewerage and flood control. They seem to have unanimously elected Manila as their trash catch basin and garbage dump.

The appalling situation must stop. Manila must not be allowed to go down the drain. It is home to one-fourth of the metropolitan population, aside from being the nation's educational center where hundreds of thousands of students flock in during the school year. Manila deserves to be safe, secure and sanitary. But it can be accorded none of the like if its trash to the nation's political and cultural capital.

Don't stack Congress rules against opposition bet

I HOPE the canvassing of the presidential and vice-presidential votes by Congress, whether by plenary or by committee, is really transparent and credible, otherwise neither will be worth the time. The counter-offensive organizations have different figures, some showing President Macapagal-Arroyo winning, others with President-elect Fernando winning. Which of these sets of figures will Congress use? Will it have its own figures, that is, what Congress will have to convince the people about?

If there are not convinced, there will be trouble. In 1986, the Batasan proclaimed Marcos as the winner. The people were not convinced, therefore believed it was Cory Aquino. That period will be cited, then in Edsa I.

The chairmanship by the Gordito and Nene-ted, both sanctioned of being neutral to GMA and, along with the ABS-CBN and ABC-5 quick exit polls and media, were accused by the opposition of "stealing" by denying GMA to be winning. It is the President's exclusive prerogative to appoint the chairman of Congress, but that GMA has won. But the opposition-ENP also has to very quick count and it shows FPJ winning. Will the people accept a verdict by Congress that is how their exit-tin-ing?

I can understand the recent exchange between Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan and Rep. Erlinger Edangalen during inaugural, Senate has Biedenzday regarding the proposed rules for the canvassing. The gist of the exchange was this:

Edangalen asked, if there is a discrepancy between the original certificates of canvass (COCs) with Congress and those of the cabinet COCs, which should be the political parties, which would be followed?

Pangilinan replied that according to the rules, the cabinet would be followed.

"Then, what are we doing here?" Edangalen asked. "Are they never swept or papers?"

Good question. The purpose of these copies is to make sure that the figures in the original are not altered during the canvassing, so that the problem will not arise. But the question then: own scope. If they do not tally, for the figures in the original are still counted, what is the use of the copies for?

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

Clients can change the numbers to be typed, add to make one or the other candidate win and Congress will still count those votes in the cabinet was that something is amiss. What kind of rule is that? What kind of boldfaces is that?

Pangilinan said the document will be treated as an election protest and go to the President, not Electoral Tribunal for judgment. But we all know how close the election is already, so, if it is to take the election protest to send and, the term of office is almost over. Even if the protestee wins, he is to an empty victory, since many decisions he could do since who were elected were promulgated a year month or much before the end of the term?

That is why the fight to any election contest is for the chance to be proclaimed first. What happens to the chairman? There is a Tagalog saying for it: "Mayhawak ka na sa sumbat mo" or

That is why this vote counting will never be stopped. The rules favor the chairman.

Even if he is caught cheating, it is too late. He has run of his stolen protests. There was the recent case of a witness in congressional election who proclaimed by the Comelec but who could not accept his position because the House Electoral Tribunal refused to unseat a rival. Angkot who had stolen been unseated) proclaimed. Only a week of the term was left by the time the winner was able to take the seat that rightfully belonged to him.

If FPJ files an election protest because of spurious COCs, do you think he would be able to assume the presidency before the term is over?

I received a copy of the latest tally of the ENP's People-Tally and Action Center. It was based on certifications of canvass, and it totaled 73.26 percent of the total votes cast nationwide. It was dated May 25, 2004, 3:03 p.m. Contrary to the other quick counts, it showed FPJ winning by more than a half million votes: 6,010,116 votes to 5,510,817 votes or against 9,980,933 for GMA, or a lead of 502,183 votes.

FPJ won in 9 of the 16 Region votes—GMA won in 7. FPJ won in Region 1, 2, 3, 4-B (Mimaropa), Region 8 (Visayas) and in Regions 11, 12, and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. He won big in the National Capital Region (Metro Manila).

GMA got more votes than FPJ in Region 4 (Bicol), but Raul Roco won the septuagenarian there. GMA also won in the Cordilleras, and in Regions 6, 7, 9 (Visayas) and in Region 10 (Northern Mindanao) and Region 13 (Caraga).

Her biggest lead was in Region 7 where she had a 1,066,862 lead over FPJ (1,230,199 votes for GMA; 284,1,20 for FPJ). Second biggest was in Region 6 where she posted 1,087,244 votes as against 897's, 511,864, or a lead of 574,188.

FPJ's biggest lead was in Region 4 where he got 1,458,283 votes to GMA's 985,438, or a lead of 472,332 votes. Next biggest was in Region 3 where he got 1,433,707 vs 1,040,907 for a lead of 326,145.

The heads of other candidates over the other in the other regions were not that big, which explains why this contest is going to be a very close one.

The latest ENP tally has FPJ winning by 502,183. It's even only has GMA winning by 40,000 votes in Luzon, which is the most populous area? Which one will the people believe? Only a day one position Congress will rule on the final count any candidate can answer that.

Here's an interesting tidbit: FPJ won by more than 1,000 votes over GMA in Cotabato, Western Samar, Sorsogon, of Quezon Cavite, general Santos and some of GMA.

Filipino nationalism in English

THE TROMPO of UP student Patricia Evangelista in the English-speaking Union in London should be to you the decades-long Philippine debate about language. We understand in English, and we have the advantage of our English skills to present Filipino sentiments, and we must put that head start to good use when we compete for global business.

In a time when other Asian economies are going hard, in every corner of their soul, to catch up with the rest of English, I can only happy that 10 students like Patricia have decided to concentrate in a language that 80 gains nationalities have traditionally dedicated. In the end, to me is the right to exercise the Philippines' rich pride and strengths with the rest of the Filipinos.

Filipinos have long agonized over the question of language. Read the 1987 Constitution. First, it says that the national language "as it evolves" shall be Filipino (with an "F" mixed now). Next, it says that the official languages for "communication and instruction" shall be Filipino and English "until otherwise provided by law."

But let us return to this principle. Language is about communication. It is an age when even cell phones ask what mode of interconnection we prefer: via Bluetooth, infrared, or cable), we must have language into the original mode of communication, a new philosophy even ago by an organ who found that their worked better to produce it once greater over a lot more, should we say specific.

But for the Filipino, language is more than just a way of talking. It is a way of talking about a specific way, a way of process, a way by which people during one another, could value a reference to the other, and determine each other's place in the pecking order.

Those who speak Spanish hundreds is to us. those that speak English, or Tagalog. Or how we those take up Spanish to help with their legal and work in the glossaries. But the ah, don't hyperventilate, nuances are elusive for foreign scholars also. Those who speak English affect a certain accent to hide those who mistake their Filipino. Indeed that feeling of distance even English-language students in the famous expressions of Filipinos learning foreign languages. When confronted with language mistakes in, say, Swahili, our proper attitude should be "So what? I didn't grow up speaking Swahili!" Does we say that for English mistakes? We don't. Indeed, for reasons that have little to do with language, and everything to do with history, it was Rizal who had the guts to confront his colonizers, collect them in a published volume, "Essays," and then to respond them.

Thus for our generation, language was a way of identifying, of creating one language as a bridge of colonial subjugation and embracing another as the honest emblem of the true soul.

Times have changed, however, the rules of the game have changed. Globalization has come upon us, and what we see we want to do here is running the game or by outsourcing it. Are we ready to master the code by which the game is played?

The brown-poet Archibald Martinez said: "In age becomes to age... when someone poets in their primary millions for the world's consent... in parallel, when [symbol], through view. No longer mean" language, to [symbol] symbol, itself means [symbol] a [symbol] action from and by our Rizal involvement, who our time to our child beggars in the rain touching on the travel members of [illegible] and [illegible], who see their Asian neighbors flourishing while their own country flounders—because the struggling Filipino has been hamstrung in every known language, including in Filipino. Let us not never beyond those long ago, and listen to what the people have to say in whatever language.

The real tragedy of our continuing confusion over language is that we lose sudden Filipinos our English well, and end up using a hybrid of [illegible] popular in our media. It is not as if we sacrificed our English proficiency in exchange for elegant Filipino. Rather, in our confusion, we have succeeded merely in "dumbing down" both Filipino and English.

I have seldom dignified Filipino scholarship on language. Perhaps, because the Filipino faculty of the Ateneo de Bernardo. It is a pity that many generations of Filipinos never had the chance to discover how poetic and elegant we can be in our language, the kind that we have discovered in our children and music, to name a few.

But we are not alone in this dilemma. Ireland, for instance, deliberately cultivated its native Finnish once a language of culture and government to supplant the lingua of its former colonizer, English is today a modern spoken by its people. Britain for a while adopted an all-British policy, but has now seen its hold and is dashing back to English. China and Russia are making their students have to learn English as a second language, and Singapore is to "do once reign them out, whether merely for call centers and outsourcing, or to the education capital of Asia, or as an IT and investment center.

There have now the steady decline of English in our country. It is not the advance of Filipino that I fear, but the success of English. Other countries have shown by close example that we need not lose one to practice other.

The drafters of the Constitution formed to political compromise in providing that although Filipino while pursuing the built to Congress on the phrase out of English. In this age, Africa and elsewhere in Asia, that brand of nationalism has unleashed the most parochial, backward and destructive urges. It is interesting that it is not those nations that have done best, we mainly in a foreign tongue commerce, to scuffle on language, while the competition surges on-ward.

Models of fighting poverty

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

MANILA—The Chinese government offered its Washington "model" for "international poverty reduction efforts in pledging $10 million to the Asian Development Bank to create the China Special Fund for Poverty Reduction and Regional Cooperation, in support of reforms programs in member countries.

The offer was announced by Premier Wen Jiabao at an address to the World Bank Global Conference on Poverty Reduction, which ended here yesterday. The pledge is in addition to a $200-million pledge to the Asian Development Fund and another $200 million to the Asian Development Fund.

Developing nations must cooperate in producing development," Wen said, "finding poverty is an ideal channel for all humanity. All nations have a shared responsibility for this."

Wen announced the offer before more than 1,000 delegates from 120 countries and regions who attended the conference sponsored jointly by the World Bank and the Chinese government.

Calling himself the biggest developing world power, Wen said Latin American leaders and the rich countries could do more to ensure security by fighting poverty rather than by launching wars. In a veiled reference to the war in Iraq, Wen said then, "there will be much resistance to fight terrorism and instability by abusing their wealth, rather than by military intervention. Brazilian President Ignacio Lula da Silva said the mere basic right of all humanity is not their weapons of mass destruction," he said. "Rather many millions of victims such were. There will be no peace without development and no development without no injustice."

Wen's speech was a departure from his diplomatic usual, historical exchange and many within speech is complex, but it is also deeply reflective born, using native and technical terminology, political and economic order. "Reducing and eliminating poverty is the most formidable global challenge, yet this is not an issue for the international community alone," he said. "It is also a political dimension. It is not just an urgent task for developed countries but also a shared responsibility for the international community."

From 1978 to 2001, China's annual gross national product grew from $149.5 billion to $1,414 billion. The annual growth rate of average household consumption increased to 7 percent, and annual per capita income reached $1,090 in 2001.

From the 1980s, China introduced a number of large, labor-intensive and possibly environmentally-unfriendly industries, clothing and textiles for over 200 million rural poor.

Wen said that, "a successful poverty reduction would hinges on honest policy or the equivalency of the socialist system and the stronger protection of our people's rights of subsistence and development."

He follows a road of socialism with Chinese characteristics, stress taking economic development as our central task," he said. "We have made the country in the past 20 years into one of the principal players of the anti-poverty campaign... While keeping the government's leading role, efforts have been made to give the market have a full role to play with stepped-up infrastructure development, and to improve the allocation and exploitation of local resources so as to enhance the capacity of the poor areas for accumulation and development."

The conference was held within the framework of the Doha Development Round of trade talks held under the auspices of the World Trade Organization, which former president James Wolfensohn said the conference was a "checkpoint" for new ideas. Wolfensohn argued, he said, the world needs "fresh approaches to development, taking small successes and applying them in other developing people."

"There is confidence on how to take successful programs and scale them up, how to enable poor people to live a stress of have less change and not an object of charity," he said.

The World Bank chief condemned rich countries the economic, social and governance components that enabled countries to reduce poverty, there known as trade regimes and financial and domestic sector policies, remember and passionate about poverty reduction programs have worked. The message of the conference is reducing poverty through models of success breakdown up.

Women and Abu Ghraib

AT LARGE

Nina Terencio-David

my heart." While she had no illusions about the US mission in Iraq, writes Hamasch, "it gave me that hitherto been illusions about women."

We may be familiar with the photos by now. Of the seven American soldiers charged for allegedly abusing Iraqi prisoners in the Abu Ghraib prison, three of them are women. One of them is shown smiling and giving the "thumbs up" sign "from behind a pile of bundled, naked Iraqi men," describes Pvt. Lynndie England, years while holding a naked Iraqi man on a leash as if he were a dog. Another, one of the male soldiers is pictured while pointing to a naked prisoner's private, presumably the penis of the person is routinely mocked because the Muslim faith considers it sinful for anyone to see the private parts of another person. Without the camera, they would be free to do as they pleased.

ABU GHRAIB names also a woman, some a few days before the Washington Post broke the scandal to the film. Death photos may have only been accidental by desire to "fit in" among their male counterparts, or were pulled into the web to convey of military machismo.

They suffering from what Hyacinth calls "a certain kind of feminist misery," the kind that presumes women are more moral, gentler and tender. Others have argued that such cliches serve to do is think that the three women were photos did not exist to enjoy or want to be doing what they were doing. They were only forced into cooperating for the camera.

But here is replied, the fact remains that the three women were in positions of responsibility to stop the abuses, and could have put a stop to them once they knew about it—and they did know about it for some time!

"The picture we show reality," counters Gen. Janis Karpinski. "But we do not show the 90 or the 95 guys who deserve no credit for treating the cases of detainees better than others, says Major Gen. Barbara Fast. And the US military ultimately responsible for the occupation of Iraq since President Bush Commander-in-Chief Paul Bremer, the special representative of these and various sort of the undesirable photographs of abuse emerged," writes Hamasch.

WHAT Abu Ghraib taught Iraqis, says Hamasch, is that women are just as capable as men of doing terrible things, and that "a woman is not a symbol only for a country."

"This doesn't mean gender equality isn't worth fighting for for its own sake," she writes. "It is. It is; believe, in democracy, there we believe in a woman's right to do and achieve whatever she can and achieve, even the bad things. It's just that gender equality cannot, all alone, bring about a just and peaceful world.

"We have to realize, in all humility, that the kind of 'feminism' that has been practiced in the US made second-rate citizens of us not only women, it also to a lazy and self-indulgent form of feminism. Self-indulgent because it assumes that a woman is a woman... a pronoun, a college degree and a high-paying career make us equal to all men—is by its very nature a victory for all of humanity. And lazy because it assumes that no one will use struggle—the struggle for gender equality—to hide the ugly face of imperialism."

"The struggles for peace and social justice and against imperialist and racist aggression, causes, I am truly sorry to say, be folded into the struggle for gender equality."

Hamasch's foremost argument is "much more kind of feminism with no illusions." It is not assimilation that should be the ultimate goal, she says, but rather collaboration and solidarity. "It is not enough to be equal to men when the men are wrong like Satan. It is not enough to assimilate. We need to create a world worth assimilating into."

Books our heroes read

LOOKING BACK

Anthony D. Dayrit

AUTHORITIES grew up in a home with books, and was touched books from childhood, collecting Filipiniana into something she came quite late in life. Our library had an assortment of professional books: business and engineering for my father, cookbooks galore for my mother, and medical books for my sister and when she was in medical school. One would not really call it a library but a collection of books placed at some point were read or parochially consulted.

Aside from the tempting blonde bombshells on their covers, I never took an interest in my father's complete collection of Erle Stanley Gardner and Mickey Spillane crime novels. There was also a complete set of the Reader's Digest Condensed Books because my mom—bless her—who would often bid on lots in the vicinity of the auction sites for years because they had different covers. Often she would read halfway through the books before realizing that she had read it before, and then would put it back on the shelf with the rest of the books.

It's only in recent years that my study on education came from those books—or, maybe library, they would have been more careful. Compared to my sister, I was not a precocious child, and I went through those first books and textbooks, but to a various child, books can also open the world beyond his home and experience. Filipino parents time and how little difficulty changing my wife's mind when it comes to buying books for the home both their and theirs from others. In my case, my education resulted from constant browsing through the aunt's medical books. There was a lot of emphasis in those books, but unfortunately the pictures depicted so much disease and abnormalities that it didn't intended to me. The only option in life.

One can never underestimate the power of books on a young and curious mind. My youngest sister was now during. She explored the parents' bedroom as a child and only now, in her mid-30s, admitted that she found out parents' transgressions

of school records and the illustrated "Joy of Sex" tucked away somewhere. That may explain why, in contrast to my dysfunctional self, she is happily married with one child to and is now expecting twins.

Even Reid grew up in a home that had a library, reputedly one of the largest and best in the Philippines at the time, and his intellectual gifts have been understandably linked to an early desire to read. He was all familiar with the story of Reid's mother reading to the ear of the unborn child, prior to birth, but we do not realize that he was fond, with a mixture of excitement and horror, how a moth actually ingested in utero, on a lighted lamp by the table and devoured by the creature of. Reid told a point that his curiously not from any family history which is an honest, at least to Philippines, as the last library of alexandria. Most of the books he read and acquired to us adult he recommend the nights and with almost thorough.

Books, like the learners, require some maintenance. Of other books, the ravages of time can't prevent the course of Reid's intellectual gifts, here come his brothers and sisters did not want out the same way even if they grew up in the same home and were exposed to the same books? Remember that Reid was the youngest of 11 children. How come he do not know about the needs of his nieces and nephews?

My older brother Antonio was also a voracious reader but he read in non-conformity reading the rank of general in the Philippine Revolution and the Filipino-American war. It seems, because

Comments are welcome at amando@inquirer.com.ph

Trustful devotion

FLORES in these Blossoms of May I want to be a prayer to Mary, a prayer for Filipino communities, a way of saying homage to Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, and a floral offering and promise.

These days, people tend to associate the month of May with the Santacruzan, a most secular activity that combines elements of a religious event and a beauty contest to raise funds for the church.

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

Many in the Philippines do not realize that the Santacruzan is a relatively recent tradition, dating only to the 19th century. Before that, the month of May was celebrated in other ways, including processions and the crowning of statues of the Virgin Mary.

The custom of crowning statues of the Virgin Mary is said to have started in Rome in the 13th century. It was introduced to the Philippines by the Spanish friars and became very popular in the 19th century. Many towns and cities in the Philippines have their own unique traditions and customs associated with the crowning of the Virgin Mary.

In some towns, the crowning is done by the parish priest, while in others it is done by a lay person chosen by the community. The crowning is usually accompanied by a procession, a Mass, and other religious activities.

The crowning of the Virgin Mary is a beautiful and meaningful tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation. It is a time for the community to come together in prayer and devotion to the Virgin Mary, and to ask for her intercession and protection.

The crowning of the Virgin Mary is also a time for the community to show its love and devotion to the Virgin Mary. Many people bring flowers, candles, and other offerings to the church or to the statue of the Virgin Mary. They also sing hymns and songs in honor of the Virgin Mary.

The crowning of the Virgin Mary is a beautiful and meaningful tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation. It is a time for the community to come together in prayer and devotion to the Virgin Mary, and to ask for her intercession and protection.

THE INQUIRER is a member of the PHILIPPINE PRESS INSTITUTE
"The National Association of Philippine Newspapers"

Spiritual hypocrisy

ON TUESDAY of election day the presidential candidates gathered at the Santuario Church for a Mass organized by former President Corazon Aquino and presided over by Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales. Everyone displayed exhibitionism and their desire for reconciliation. In point of scientific piety, they were photographed kneeling side by side as they prayed for honest and peaceful elections. The archbishop in one point of his homily, referred to them as "leaders our country can be proud of." The good prelate must have made this statement tongue-in-cheek, or has to merely one of touch with reality for not having read the newspapers or listened to the radio over the last decade.

Public display of fanatical worship as was seen at the San Agustin Church is tempting divine wrath. Why lecture President Arroyo less her name and participated in the collective act of spiritual hypocrisy is tragic. We pray to the Lord in every mass gathering which may explain why God seems to have abandoned us. Hardly had the ballots counting begun when cries of fraud were raised and leaders calls for action in the streets made. Fraud was committed in the course of the campaign in the mobilization size of public funds and blatant violations of Comelec rules. Calling together to prepare the counting of the election laws was downplayed as the Lord, and we will see how the mudslinging is in the next six years.

Here lies the fault of the religious leadership of the country: when it dignifies personalities even if they are known to have been partisan as was intended at the

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to this 897-4704, 897-0766, or e-mail readersadvocate@inq7.net

LETTERS

Inquirer.com.ph

Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

nation, even worse, when it endorses arguments for public office in anticipation of preferential treatment in the exercise of power. One wonders why, for instance, the Iglesia ni Cristo of Bishop Eraño Manalo and the El Shaddai of Rev. Mike Velarde had to dangle the prospect of their endorsement until the eve of the elections, when one character and the background of every candidate was revealed on the day they launched their candidacies. Was it to make sure they'd be betting on the winning horse, regardless of how the loser was unmasked? What a way to impart morality and civic mindedness to the flock!

—E.P. BARAAD JR.
43 Infanta St., Philamlife Village, Pamplona, Las Piñas City

Higher dimension of marriage

By 185 votes, "Pinoy Ako" (PDI, 5/20/04), Michael Tan's observations are curiously grounded on anthropology, the science of the physical, cultural and social development of man. While that is his starting point, he refuses human nature and ignores the fact that man is also spiritual.

It is in the planet of spirituality that marriage can be understood as the complementary union of one man and one woman. This union involves the giving of self freely by the spouses to each other both giving totality of the opposite sex and bodily fruitative capacities of the man and the woman. Special mention should be made of her openness to life in childbearing. This is why marriage has been raised to the level of a sacrament.

We have certainly no rights to misfortune people from other races, cultures or religions just because polygamous marriage forms part of their mores. But those who have given their vows in sacramental marriage have no excuse to denigrate their marriage bonds through "fool-hopping," cunnilingus, adultery and other acts of marital infidelity.

By the same way analysis, I do not deny that some people who are branded as "conservatives"—particularly those who speak "in the name of the Church"—have charity and understanding for gays and lesbians. But I also do not agree with the Marxists on the idea that not to legalize same-sex marriages is an injustice. Gays and lesbians (a number of them are good friends of mine) have the same human rights and respect. However, their clamor for "specific rights" must not be considered as any ground for same-sex couples to raise adopted children, no matter how noble their intentions may be. Such a practice is an open solicitation to the HIV (Acquired) virus and other forms of sexually transmitted diseases.

In his book, "The Battle for Humanity," Dr. Gerald Anthony points that homosexuality (and transsexuality) is harmful. He counsels that when the homosexual tendency is felt, it is important for the gay or lesbian not to engage in homosexual acts but—he warns—Mother Nature must deal with other forms of sexual perversion.

—ARTURO ESPINOSA,
anselmosusa2000@yahoo.com

Lesbian 'wedding' on television

I CONGRATULATE the Movie Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) for cutting the attention of the two giant networks to their showing of "obnoxiously obscenities on prime time TV" programs, giving the impression that the network is encouraging lesbian and homosexual relationships and (2) commitment to

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

saying lesbianism and homosexuality are all right."

I am a mother to two children and I am very much concerned how such lesbian and solipsism are treated in various TV programs these days.

Society must value its gays/lesbians because they are human. We cannot help that they are gays/lesbians. But to tolerate, embrace and accept their sexual preference as right is wrong. They may have made it politically correct but they know for a fact that, morally, it is wrong.

Just because some parts of the world have "accepted" their sexual preference doesn't make it any less wrong—morally.—Rina Caluendan, Pasig City, via e-mail

* * *

I'm shocked by the derogatory comments made by the MTRCB chair. Where right has she to discuss the morality of this country? Just because people count themselves as members of religious organizations does not mean they get an elevator policy for the country based on their particular view of morality. We do not have a theocracy. We cannot allow ourselves to anti-puritanvocalist and discriminate against homosexuals in the belief that there is an alternate behavior. It's this type of thinking that promotes gay bashing and other acts of discrimination in this country. We must change this if were are to grow as a people.—Rodel Serrano, Unit 11, 2245 O'Campo St., Mauay City

* * *

I fully agree and support what the MTRCB has released to the press. Indeed, I fear for those children and young minds who witnessed the airing of the indecent events. I applaud the courage of MTRCB Chair Montano Laxamiana for the audacity she has shown, notwithstanding the costs and the risks of her actions..."not to conform or compromise." This controversial story touches her only as chair of the MTRCB but also as a principled person when upholds Christian morality.—Librarian Karlsgirl, Los Angeles, CA, USA, via e-mail

* * *

The comments of MTRCB Chair Laxamiana concerning sexuality are appalling. They sound very much like voices from the Spanish Inquisition.

The comments are so obviously unscientific, uncaring and, dare I say, stupid and naive, I would have thought that a government board would have exhibited itself about these matters before making such public comments. I am a father and a grandfather, and frankly I am appalled to hear such nonsense. Please, may I ask her and the board to refrain the feelings to bring themselves into the 21st century and liberate themselves from the bigotry of their own religious beliefs.—Maverick Fisher, 2000s' '87, Liverpool fa., Sydney NSW 2000, Australia, via e-mail

* * *

Even if I personally believe that homosexuality is not an abnormality, I think the MTRCB is right. The abortion, divorce and breast movies, the open expression of homosexuality, whether done on prime time or not, should never be allowed in the Philippines.—Ray Infante, San Francisco, via e-mail

* * *

It is said that homosexuality is still considered by the MTRCB as "an abnormality of human nature." It is as if the MTRCB is trying to hide the fact that homosexuality exists. Yes, maybe the showing of the "obnoxiously bizarre" on prime time TV was not right, but the MTRCB can't have the rest TV manufacturers hide what is really going on in the real world. Do we want to be ignorant about these issues? It is happening and there is nothing we can do to stop it. Maybe it's time we educate ourselves and our children. Homosexual people are also human beings; we cannot judge them and their current judgment. There are far more pressing issues than this. We have our own thoughts, feelings and opinions, and I hope we respect their rights as much as they respect us "normal people." I hope that the MTRCB will not be anxious about this issue again. I am not a lesbian, but I have gay and lesbian friends and they are normal people.—Rose Labbadan, Quezon City

PAMULINAWAN FESTIVAL

Dancers highlight their costumes with designs that show Manny Pacquiao in "Ciervo Capindol de las Philippinas" during the inter-school costume-dancing competition, one of the highlights of the week-long 2004 Panagbenga festival.

Conviction of another person in Ecleo case not irregular, says judge

By Jobim B. Balsobre and Jhunnex Magallanes
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Regional Trial Court Judge Edilberto Sepin has maintained there is nothing irregular with his decision to convict another person for conspiring to kill Alfonso Ecleo Jr.

He stressed he was not bribed or pressured because the convictions were already unanimous after Cecilia Fernandez owned up the crime.

"The truth of the matter is the prosecution filed this case before this court through an information. It is unmerited on the part of the court upon seeing the complaint with all the supporting documents and evidence. The court has no reason to deny that," he said.

Sepin is the presiding judge of the RTC Branch 60 based in South town.

Accessory

On May 7, he convicted Jovito Fernandez of accessory to the murder of Ecleo and sentenced him to four to eight years imprisonment.

The prosecution accused the National Bureau of Investigation and Ecleo's family because they did not know that a case had been filed against Fernandez.

Reynaldo Bascuguin, MD, director to Central Visayas, said the convictions of Fernandez was "very unusual" and could just be a carefully executed "script" to clear Rubien Ecleo Jr., who is facing parricide charges in another court for killing his wife.

He added Sepin's decision could affect the charges filed against Ecleo, a former mayor in his town, Danajon Island and Supreme Leader of Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association (PBMA).

Intervenors said the NBI had wanted probe on a possible conspiracy between Ecleo, government prosecutors and private lawyers in trying to assassinate Ecleo from parricide charges.

Probe

Aside from Sepin, also subjected in the investigation were three provincial prosecutors Cesar Tejadamogan, location Reynold Rido Provincial Treasurer Nicanor Bandolas, Acting Provincial Prosecutor Magdalena Alfonso, private prosecutor Noel Shebel, Fernandez's lawyer Jun Salazar, and Ecleo's lawyers Orlando Arbalandez and Giovanni Hora.

Bandolas filed the information against Fernandez, which was approved by Tejadamogan.

The information claimed that on Jan. 5, 2002 at around 8:30 p.m., Fernandez allegedly conspired with the late Ben Bacolod, brother of the victim.

The information further alleged that they intentionally assisted and strangled his sister while Bernandez acted as a consultant.

But Sepin said it should be the public prosecutors, not the judge, who ought to be investigated.

He said he did not violate any law because both the public and the private prosecutors made it appear that he is involved, considered the victim was the real complainant of the case.

"The court was made to believe that Annie Bacolod was the real complainant. I was not aware about the (Alfonso's) rulings. There was 101 percent belief that Annie is the real complainant. I don't have to dig deeper," he said.

Sepin said he only met Annie during the arraignment on April 29 and re-arraignment on May 7 where Fernandez pleaded guilty to the crime.

He added he also did not meet Bacolod, nor did he get acquainted with Tejadamogan.

Procedure

"I can't do anything about it but tell the truth. I have no personal interest with this case. It's the procedures. The prosecutions must be coming from with them hands. It's their duty," he added.

Sepin also pointed out that it was the duty of the prosecutor, and not the judge, to consolidate the murder case with Ecleo's parricide case, now pending before Judge Meinrado Commander of RTC Branch 14 in Cebu City.

The judge noted that Fernandez was "spontaneous" and "candid" when he testified on the necessity of his confession executed in General Santos City in December last year.

Fernandez had told the court that he was aware of the consequences of his action but would still come to be united with the parents because he was being hunted by his conscience, the judge said.

3 family members murdered in Isabela

ANGADANAN, Isabela—Six heavily armed men barged into a house of a family here on Wednesday night, killing three family members and wounding two others, police said.

The victims were having dinner while the others were watching television when the men, who were armed with M-16 and M-14 Armalite rifles, broke into the house at Barangay Magsaysay, police said.

Killed were Bernard Tavadon, 54, his daughter Angelica Rae, 8, and his nephew Joel Tavadon, 25. Seriously wounded were Tavadon's wife, Irene, 52, and his brother Noel Tavadon, 25. They were taken to the Cauayan District Hospital for treatment.

Tavadon was shot in the back and died instantly. His wife was shot in the upper lip.

Suspects

Police have yet to arrest the suspects, who were identified to a report as Rudy Arellas, Normando Arellas, Gilda Arellas, Rowena Tavadon, Rainero Tavadon and Lito Tavadon.

Senior Supt. Napoleon Estilles, Isabela police director, ordered the Angadanan police to track down the killers.

Tavadon's wife Irene told investigators that the suspects were relatives who were feuding with her husband over a land dispute.

In San Mateo town, three people died and six others were seriously injured when a wayward passenger jeepney slammed into a tailgating cherry tractor on the national highway in Barangay Guinabon Ilaya.

Killed is Benito and Gloria, all surnamed Concepcion, vacationed to head injuries. The injured were taken to a hospital in Santiago City.

Reports said the victims, who were all passengers of the tailgating, were on their way to their farm when the accident happened.

The jeepney driver, Julius Isaac, was detained at the San Mateo jail. Villamor Ulanga Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

ROUNDUP

Bank negotiates for pension plan

COMMONWEALTH—The Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) is negotiating with consultants for them to serve as consultants in the review of pensions, LBP President Margarito Teves said that under the setup, Teves pensioners living in areas where there was no LBP branch could redeem their pension in other rural banks. This way, he added, pensioners would not be inconvenienced. Teves said that now the LBP and concerned rural banks agree on the matter, the parties would enter into a Memorandum of Agreement. Teves, however, admitted there's opposition to the move by the LBP to roll this up all over the country. **Rimmy Esmeralda, PDI Visayas Bureau**

8 inmates bolt jail

TACLOBAN CITY—Eight inmates bolted their Leyte City jail in Leyte on May 19, leaving one jail guard dead and another critically wounded. One of the inmates, Pingkoy Dagling, was captured the next day in Barangay Babtad, Tanauan. Killed was Marlon Gil Sala, Sobrinas Escalona, Another jail guard, Armando Tantiog, 32, suffered stab wounds in the stomach and neck. Jail Officer 2 Eric Diaz said inmate Cecilio Bonsubre stabbed Tantiog. Bonsubre took Tantiog's .45-caliber pistol and repeatedly shot Escalona, after one then pointed at the rest of the secretary. He, Diaz, Jimmy Abrenuncian joined Bonsubre in letting out the jail. They were Dagling, Jeanito Baloro, 31, Eleazar Sano, 24, Edito Bolado, 30, Allan Lopez, 28, Jayson Gadiano, 19, and Ronald Lumbay. **Jose Valverde, PDI Visayas Bureau**

Proposed pharmacy

CAMARINES SUR—Top provincial and city officials have expressed the proposed establishment of a drug pharmacy for senior citizens after a bill to create the Naga-based 20-pharmacy chain and for medicines due to the refusal of some pharmacies to grant the discount. Executive Secretary Diosdado Ely Mayor Jesse Robredo and Bicol Chamber Exec. George Almeda expressed their support to the ordinance, stating the establishment of "Botika ng Lahat" (Pharmacy for the Senior Citizens) Office). Other earlier said senior citizens in the city had been complaining about the refusal of some drug pharmacies to give them the 20-percent discount as mandated by law. Private pharmacy owners had pointed out that they would suffer huge losses if they would grant the discount. **Ronny Armando, PDI Visayas Bureau**

Soldier slain in blast

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A soldier was killed while five others were injured when a grenade accidentally exploded inside the barracks of the 1st Scout Ranger Regiment in Camp Enrile in Barangay Mampang here around 2 p.m. yesterday. Southern Command spokesperson Lt. Col. Francis Pascua said the soldiers were still identifying the identity of the dead soldier. Pascua identified the wounded soldiers as 2Lt. Reynaldo Obsioco, Sgt. Edgar Bellarde, Corporals Mike Tongson, Benjamin Clemot and Cipriano Bagsangab. "We cannot categorically say that it is sabotage but although we have not determined yet why it exploded and the unit concern is still investigating. The only confirmed report about the circumstances behind the incident. Task Force Zamboanga chief Col. Antonio Ellegado said the soldiers had just returned from Sulu, where they secured mid-elections, when the incident occurred. Magaloc said the grenade belonged to the dead soldier. **John Aljosha, PDI Mindanao Bureau**

Flour truck hijacked

KIBAWE, Bukidnon—A truck loaded with 300 bags of wheat flour worth P200,000 was hijacked in the township on armed men who laughed and dumped the truck driver, his wife and helper after seizing the truck load of flour on May 22. Truck driver Alejandro Cardenas, 28, and his wife Ronnie, 26, both of Barangay Mandalan, San Benito, northeast Davao, and found helper Edgar Matanog, 40, marched and recovered Barangay Balite, San Isidro, northern Davao were on their way to Davao at 1 a.m. when an L-300 van cut-flagged them down and ran away, armed with .45-cal. revolvers, ordered them to get out of the truck at gunpoint. The three were hurriedly loaded the van and were dumped along the road at Barangay Jamayan, Tacurong City. They were found by passing people. Barrels recovered and were taken to the Tacurong city police. **Mel Nagarse, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau**

Suspected pushers nabbed

BATANGAS CITY—Police arrested four suspected drug pushers in a raid in Sitio Pinagtipunan, Barangay Cuta this city on May 21. Arrested were Fernando De Castro, 40, laundry worker from Bukidnon town, and an 18-year-old pupil. Police found one packet containing 200 milligrams of shabu and a P1,000-bill. Also in the operation, police raided another house at 1 a.m. and arrested two more suspected drug pushers—Alexander Hernandez, 30, fisherman of Tingloy, and Mario Mangoma, 35, resident of the place. **Mel Nagarse, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau**

Viva, Welcoat plaster rivals

By Mars Anthony Reyes

VIVA Mineral Water-FEU tightened up its defense in the second quarter and cruised to an 80-69 victory over Toyota Otis-Letran yesterday, moving within a win of the PBL 2nd Unity Cup title playoffs at the Pasig Sports Center.

With their superior 10-1 record, the Water Stars can coop a best-a playoff for the second championship berth with another victory in the double-round semifinals. Two more wins get them into the finals outright.

But Viva coach Joe Bonoan said they "have the responsibility to win all the games in the semis."

Bonoan added: "We have that responsibility to the crowds to play our best even if we make the finals early."

In the second game, Jervalee Vaughn scored 20 points, while Chester Tolentino added 19 as Welcoat Paints demolished defending champion Negros Steelmasters, 79-65.

The Paint Masters improved to 7-4, while the North Spartans dropped to 5-6.

The Water Stars snapped out of a sleepwalk in the first quarter, where they totaled the meager-by-teams, 14-12.

"We were focused on our offense, which is simple and executable," said Bonoan.

Charging down on defense, the Water Stars pulled away for good in the eight Cesar Catli, Gerard Jones, Warren Bonifacio and Jovelyn Gonzales.

Jones scored 8 and Viva led 20-14.

Jones stole the third quarter. The MVP-to-contender also pulled down 17 rebounds and had three steals, two assists and one block.

Viva (80)
Fabiyan
Gonzales 6-0-1 at 12-12, 12-12.
Jones 8-0-0 at 16-16, 16-16.
Bonifacio 5-0-0 at 10-10, 10-10.
Catli 4-0-0 at 8-8, 8-8.
Tolentino 3-0-0 at 6-6, 6-6.
Vaughn 20-0-0 at 40-40, 40-40.
Gonzales 17-0-0 at 34-34, 34-34.

Negros Steelmasters (65)
Tolentino 19-0-0 at 38-38, 38-38.
Bonifacio 5-0-0 at 10-10, 10-10.
Catli 4-0-0 at 8-8, 8-8.
Jones 8-0-0 at 16-16, 16-16.
Gonzales 6-0-1 at 12-12, 12-12.
Vaughn 20-0-0 at 40-40, 40-40.
Gonzales 17-0-0 at 34-34, 34-34.

DRIBBLE Duo of Toyota Otis-Letran's Jervalee Vaughn (left) and Viva's Jovelyn Gonzales try to grab a rebound in the game yesterday against Viva-FEU. —RAY ALMENDRAS

Canada five confirms Fiesta stint

By Jose Navarro

BARRIO major hockey, Canada's University of British Columbia will be one of two foreign teams playing in the quarterfinals of the PBA Great Moments Basketball Conference.

Following the UBC Thunderbirds' confirmation, the Canadian Basketball Association signed an arrangement on how to support the team, PBA commissioner Rick Bala said yesterday.

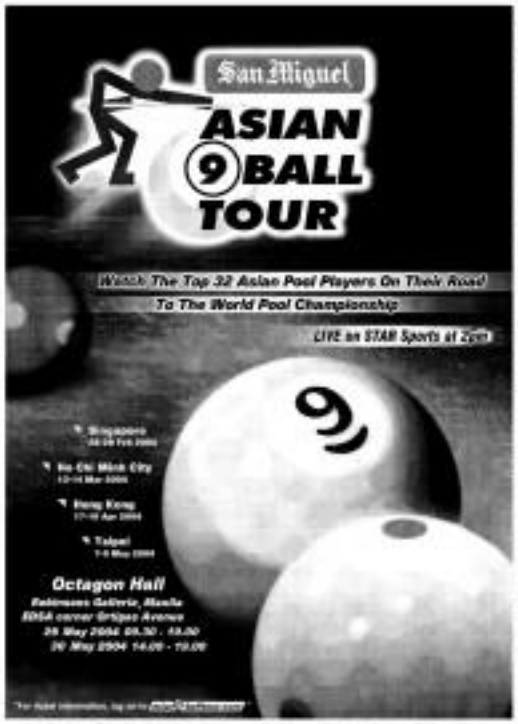
The Canadian Basketball Association is also drawn to support the campaign of the UBC Thunderbirds' in the PBA. In turn, commissioner Bala said, is expected to conclude the season in their program for Canada Day on July 1, "Festival de Canada."

The UBC Thunderbirds will play a minimum of three games beginning with the quarterfinals next week, when they will be matched with three-of-five or fifth seeds. The top qualifier after the single-round eliminations will meet the second ranked team of the other group.

But while the Thunderbirds have guaranteed their participation, the Letran-Alcantara has yet to finalize its entry due to scheduling woes.

The Letranites will playing in a tournament in Dublin, Ireland, the PBA D-day and Emirates to host other foreign squads not to one they sing all.

However, Eric declined to reveal the foreign teams being eyed as possible replacement.



Suico tangles with African champ in eliminator today

WILL a new Filipino boxing hero emerge today?

Economic-fisted Randy "Kamong Kato" Suico, who has one of world-ring glory icons when he tangles with unbeaten Mzonke Bass of South Africa in a 12-round eliminator at the Orlando Community Hall in Soweto, Johannesburg.

Bass, the undefeated Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation super featherweight titlist, and Suico, the World Boxing Council International super featherweight king, clash for the right to challenge world champion Erik Morales.

Bass ranked #8th No. 2, Suico (22-9, 11 KOs) and the top-rated Suico (21-2, 9 KOs) are fighting in the main event of a card being put up by promoter Rodney Mthembeni.

It is the biggest fight for the ball-at-ring Filipino since Gabriel "Flash" Elorde, a junior lightweight amateur champion who will be facing a heavyweight for considered to South Africa's best but for a world crown.

Suico is managed by Japan's Joe Hakiyama, while Suico is handled by Mkhabela.

Suico will be fighting for the third time in the ring. The judges are Bruce McTavish of the Philippines, Thobi Sampooni of South Africa and Irvin Commander of India. —Gabriel L. Lagumbay

Gamo, seven other Navy pugs advance

BRAGO CITY, Bonoan del Norte — In a battle royale between unbeaten Navy veterans, Bertie Gamo outpointed Noel Lumina, 20-16, on Wednesday to lead seven other Navy-team pugs to the semifinals of the National Amateur Boxing Championships being held in the Filoden Multi-Purpose gymnasium.

Gamo survived Lagumbay's fast fists to win the bout and will meet Lumina in their bantam weight quarterfinal match.

Gamo will meet Dumaguete City's Alvin Dinamling, who beat Lumina's Dick Pinto-Abaño, in the quarterfinals on Friday.

The powerhouse Navy boxing team lost only two of nine quarterfinal bouts and appears to have the inside track to the overall crown as the team organized by the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines and boxed by Dante del Rosario Boy Tom Boy Fernando.

Navy's Johnny Cadiga stopped Bertie Bonoan of Cagdianao 1:40 of the first round while teammate Franklin Alba posted a KO (3-0) referee stopped contest over Gabriel Alba in 1:26 of the third round Commander Ulan of Compostela Valley in a pair of light flyweight bouts.

Reyes favored in SMB 9-ball

THE FIFTH and final leg of the San Miguel Asian 9-Ball Tour get underway tomorrow at the Octagon of Robinson's Galleria in Mandaluyong.

And Biliardo all over will be on hand. Reyes, the three-leg runner who will try to cop his nationwide run with a victory in the $50,000 tournament in front of hometown fans.

The games will be aired live over ESPN-Star Sports. The telecast begins at 2 p.m. tomorrow with the quarterfinal round, with the semifinal set at 3:30 p.m., 5 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Replays of those games will be on June 1, 2, 3 and May 30, respectively, starting at 9:00 p.m.

Reyes has cooked a comfortable lead between him and the rest of the field in the dredging race, snapping up three of the first four legs and four of the first five.

Reyes will be last seen winning in his own in Chinese-Taipei—home to pool unless out to challenge the Filipino domination of the sport.

Barbosa pins 2nd loss on top seed Paragua

Weightlifting: Alexis C. Barbosa (61 k), Marlon Jay S. Ravi, Valenzuela, 2 lbs (bantam 3-0, 10 lbs); Christian L. Cagas (61 k, lightweight 3-0, 10 lbs); Ramon

Economy up 6.4 percent

From page A1

down literature. "To me, much of it was driven by domestic consumption, some of which may have been aided by election-related spending by government."

Consumer-driven

Domestic consumption, as measured by personal expenditure, grew 5.8 percent in the first quarter, compared to 5.8 percent in the year-ago period last year. The NSCB noted marked increases in consumer expenditures for food, beverages, clothing, footwear, transportation and communication.

The robust personal consumption growth also kept the sluggish government spending, which grew at only 2.2 percent due in effect to cutting the budget deficit.

Surprised

Jong Sing Shin, regional economist with Gil Gih Securities, said he was surprised at some of the figures and did not think the gains were sustainable, with much of the upturn due to election spending.

"The first surprise was how the agriculture sector performed in the first quarter but the real surprise is that the industry sector did so well. If you look at the export sector's performance, it does not reflect that strength of the industry sector," Jong said.

Output in the agriculture, fishery and forestry sectors rose 7.7 percent, compared to 2.9 percent a year earlier. The services sector was up 6.4 percent and industrial output 5.5 percent. Exports are expected to expand 10 percent in 2004 compared to a 1.54 percent rise in 2003.

Jong attributed much of the growth to election spending, with candidates spending about P30 billion, adding that it had "not had that much effect" on growth.

Oil prices are a concern

Bing Asistio, economist with the Manila-based consultancy Wilfred Business Bureau, said the first quarter growth should give the economy enough momentum to hit the higher range of the 2004 growth target.

However, high oil prices are a concern and "that's the time the economy will get into trouble," he said.

Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr., chair of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said GDP growth could continue to 7 percent in the second quarter if global oil prices continue their upward.

Figures from the Department of Energy showed that month-to-date crude oil price in the benchmark Dubai market averaged $34.68 per barrel, an increase of $8 from $27.68 per barrel in April. Since January, local gasoline prices have gone up five times by a total of P5.30 per liter while diesel prices went up four times by P2.10 per liter.

"If the oil price problem does not persist in the second half of the year we can see a GDP growth of 6.3 percent for the entire year," Ortiz-Luis said. "If it does, growth could probably be as low as only 5 percent.

Underestimated

Neri Sandoval said the real low income not only by analysts but also by multilateral institutions that the GDP growth in 2004 would only be 4.5 percent at best. A more distant quarterly pull of 33 economists forecast the economy would grow a modest 6.05 percent this year from 2003, up from the revised 4.7 percent annual decline last year.

"They tend to underestimate our growth potential and they have been proved wrong in many times," he said. "The economy has enough bright spots to mitigate these to oil prices and interest rates . . . The economy's engines of growth were generally healthy. All economic sectors registered expanded."

One of the bright spots that Neri cited was the P171.4 billion worth of foreign direct investments that entered the country in the first quarter, is the same period last year, only P6.3 billion worth of foreign direct investments was recorded.

Neri said there were indications that growth would also be aided by the recent monetary policy, which the central bank should be at the "higher end" of the government's target of between 4.5 and 4.5 percent due largely to the higher oil prices.

He said the high level of economic activity was reflected in the creation of 1.4 million new jobs in January alone, compared to only 11 4,000 new jobs during the same month last year.

Neri said more government support to ensure higher productivity in the agriculture and mining sectors may help to counter the impact of high oil prices.

RP neighbors

Mr. Macapagal said the government would consider passed while maintaining its policy of prudent fiscal management and tighter spending to keep the budget deficit under control.

Even so, the Philippines is still struggling to match the pace of recovery of other Asian economies due to problems such as the annual budget deficit of nearly 5 percent of GDP and widespread corruption that has deterred foreign investors.

Malaysia's economy grew 7.6 percent in the year through the first quarter, and the Thai government reported an expansion of 7.3 percent in its SOF billionaire GDP figures for the first quarter showed a more modest 4.46-percent growth rate from a year earlier.

The peso closed steadier at 55.875 to the US dollar, compared to 55.905 on Wednesday.

The bank's main stock index fell 0.6 percent on Thursday as investors focused on selective profit taking rather than the GDP data. With reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Jocelyn Y. Uy, Dominique, AP, WP and Reuters

Chavez names 4 'runners' in agricultural fund scam

From page A1

coordinated with congressmen, governors and mayors for the release of funds and the "ghost" projects and deliveries of "ligwid" fertilizer.

The runners reportedly got 25 percent and the unnamed agriculture undersecretary close to the First Gentleman another 25 percent of the P1 million to P5 million released to each of 195 congressmen, 33 governors and 23 mayors.

The betrayed making noise

Chavez said sources from the Department of Agriculture (DA) said this "lopsided" distribution of funds to the last undersized counterfeit executives and congressmen, who were said to be willing to come up with the documents in connection with the alleged graft surrounding the DA's "Countering Mosquitoes Intl" (CMA) program.

"They feel betrayed. They saw sons in Atika Arroyo's text who got an unsub as 30 persons when it was their names that were on the list of recipients. They are the ones who have to answer for all of the undelivered fertilizer," an informed source at the DA said.

In a telephone interview, Chavez made the same point. "Those who did not receive the funds or received little in commission are making the biggest noise," he said.

In his complaint, Chavez said the legislators and local executives got 20 percent, while the suppliers close to the undersecretary received 20 percent of the funds.

Lorenzo

The DA source said Agriculture Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo Jr., who was belatedly named a co-respondent in the plunder case, was not savvy of the alleged graft in the CMA program but that he "left the whole thing up to Jocelyn I. Bolante, the DA's administrative and finance undersecretary.

"He did not want to have anything to do with it, so he issued a special order giving Bolante the power to sign the papers in his behalf. He also asked that the money be channeled to Bolante's office," the source said.

He dismissed that Bolante was Arroyo's classmate at the Ateneo de Manila University and a college fraternity brother of Deputy Ombudsman Jose Balajadia.

In his complaint, Chavez besmirched the Office of the Ombudsman with a six-page list of the beneficiaries of the project, bearing the signatures of Bolante.

"If Mike is up there, can Gloria [Mrs. Arroyo] be far behind?" asked Chavez.

Earlier, Bukidnon Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri admitted having received an allotment of P5 million, but said he did not touch it. His brother, Bukidnon Gov. Jose Ma. Zubiri Jr., denied receiving anything for his province, even if the DA-Ilit showed him getting P5 million.

Other beneficiaries were Representatives Roque R. Ablan (P5 million), Belen Yerro (P5 million), Florido Ilarza-Bobair (P5 million), Jose S. Salcedo (P5 million), Manuel Zamora (P5 million), Dragnes Negrales (P5 million), Robert Ace Barbers (P5 million), Prospero A. Pichay Jr. (P5 million), Augusto Syjuco (P5 million), Apolinario G. Lozada Jr. (P5 million), Raul Gonzalez (P5 million), Arnulfo Siquian (P5 million), Gerardo Espina (P5 million) and Edmundo G. Reyes Jr. (P5 million).

The governors included Roger Ike Espino of Biliran, Erico Aristotle Aumentado of Isabela, Leandro Mercado Jr. of Camarines Norte, Rodolfo F. del Rosario of Davao del Norte, Vicente Tejada of Iloilo, Victor Francisco Ortega of La Union, Casimiro Ma. D. Reyes of Marinduque, Rebecca Villacin of Rizal, Robert Lyndon Barbers of Surigao del Norte, Isagani Amarga of Zamboanga del Norte and Victor Agustin F. Aglugub of Binguinon. Each allegedly received P5 million.

Separate plunder case

A group of militant farmers yesterday said they would like next week a separate plunder case against the President, Lorenzo and Bolante for the alleged misuse of agriculture funds.

The Bikaing Magbubukid ng Pilipinas said it was collecting evidence to show that P1 billion in government funds went to Ms. Macapagal's campaign kitty instead of being spent on fertilizer and farm inputs under the GMA program.

"It would be very difficult for the President to justify where the funds went. No single farmer benefited from the so-called

PRESIDING over the summit at the Boracay Pavilion are Senate President Franklin Drilon and House Speaker Jose de Venecia. ZIA MONCAYO

TO KEEP out supporters of Fernando Poe Jr., police occupy the perimeter of Ex. Peter's Church on Commonwealth Avenue where the late Poe contingent had previously set up camp. ZIA MONCAYO

crop insurance against the Peninsular, Lawrence and Bolante for the alleged misuse of agriculture funds.

The Bikaing Magbubukid ng Pilipinas said it was collecting evidence to show that P1 billion in government funds went to Ms. Macapagal's campaign kitty instead of being spent on fertilizer and farm inputs under the GMA program.

"It would be very difficult for the President to justify where the funds went. No single farmer benefited from the so-called 'fertilizer' scam," Danilo Ramos, BMP secretary general, said.

While the administration is busy delivering accusations on the misuse of agricultural funds, it is facing a similar controversy arising from the alleged misuse of funds generated from legalized gambling.

Pagcor fund

Bishop Archbishop Oscar Cruz yesterday said that charges would be filed against officials of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., who allegedly spent P68 million of its revenues to finance the candidacy of the President.

"The Pagcor issue is not over . . . All these [cases of] misappropriation of funds are subject to judicial evaluation. These Pagcor officials should suffer the consequences [of their actions]," Cruz told the Inquirer in a phone interview yesterday.

Cruz said PlunderWatch, which received from him the documents on the alleged fund misuse, would be filing the charges soon. It was merely waiting for the issue related to the canvassing of votes for president and vice president to settle down.

PlunderWatch earlier said it would most likely file charges of plunder against the Pagcor board members and management officials. It also said that the Pagcor officials could be held liable for betrayal of public trust.

"Pagcor is heading the wrong road, choosing the wrong values, and its key operators could land in the wrong place. Plunder. Which is watching, preparing and acting," Cruz said in a statement. With reports from Norman Bordadora and Blanche S. Rivera

RP, US ...

From page A1

of Lakambuhay Commission, and representatives of the Philippine National Workers.

The group quoted Pahlatt as saying that the poll measured mainland "responses in entirely different hearts on the use of US."

The base sample found still be skipped to the United States for analysis.

Environment Secretary Elisa Ganzon hailed the new find as proof of the country's vast biological diversity that has landed the Philippines in the list of 10 "megadiverse" countries of the world.

Gil's party mates want to scalp him

From page A1

their campaign expenses.

Some lone members of Gil's ruling Lakas, Isang Chen party—including his mayoral candidates in Pasay and Malabon City—went to the Department of Justice yesterday to complain that Gil, his aide Ellen Sarmiento and political officer Joy de Asis had duped them.

"Gil fooled all of us. He has now cost guys into deep hit, but the person you are on television is different from who he is in reality. He's feeding the media. He's feeding everybody," said Leo Cadion, who ran for councilor in Pasay City under Gil's party ticket.

Nicanor Antolan, who ran for mayor of Malabon City and lieutenants Abingo, a mayoral candidate in Pasay City, said city councilmen of Gil's party from all over the country were also planning to sue the businessman for unpaid and moral damages.

Lost money, credibility

They claimed that they lost not only their money but their credibility in their communities. Many of them said they had to shoulder campaign costs to campaign hill time and run for office under Gil, who had promised to pay the country's debts if he won the presidential elections.

"My children are being teased that their nanoong ran for mayor without any cash," Abingo said.

"Even people here at the DOJ laughed at us when we said we were filing a complaint against Gil," Cadion added.

Cadion said Gil repeatedly promised him and other candidates that he would reimburse them their campaign expenses. He said he spent around P900,000 of his own money and made loans from different people for the campaign.

Cadion showed to reporters bank checks for P50,000 and P100,000, allegedly given to him by Gil's politico in Pasay City, Jonathan Sy. Sarmiento, Gil's aide, has the campaign expenses, but he said the checks bounced.

Abingo said one of Gil's candidates in Bonifacio City in 1995 town spent P300,000 in election expenses. The complainants did not know how much they spent in Malabon City, where they went to the DOJ yesterday. Bray Cabellon, who ran for councilor in Pasig, turned in a hand-written complaint. Another, Manuel Bunoy, came all the way from San Mariano Al varez, Cavite, to complain that he spent P500,000 for the elections, and was not reimbursed.

Unpaid caterer

Caterer Cynthia Perez said in Jesus grew her a P60,000 donation payment for Gil's birthday bash at the Cuneta Astrodome, only to bounce. "I bet she has yet to get the P100,000 balance that Gil owes her.

"No other causes in Pasay wanted to accept the job because of rumors about Gil. But because their promise sounded good, we accepted their offer," Perez said.

Gil also failed to pay his hotel and restaurant bills during a campaign sortie in Cagayan de Oro City.

Biazon claims 12th spot; Barbers says it ain't over

From page A1

during figures from he, Biazon yesterday claimed that he appeared to have won the 12th slot in the senatorial race.

Biazon said in a press conference at the Senate that he was ahead of Barbers by some 42,000 votes as of yesterday.

"If these results, as indicated by these documents, are allowed, then they will know how a lifetime gunned fights," said Biazon as he held up the copies of the election returns and certificates of canvass (COCs) in front of television cameras.

A total of 36,000 votes from seven municipalities in Lanao del Sur and an undetermined number of votes from 292 precincts in Cotabato City have yet to be canvassed.

"Can I be sure in all seven towns? I got zero in three towns [in Lanao]. But it is a statistical improbability that I will [not get any of the] 36,000 votes," he said.

But Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said yesterday morning said that initial reports reaching him showed that Biazon's lead had dwindled because of the votes from Lanao del Sur.

"The election in Lanao del Sur is over. They told me that Biazon's lead was narrowed down," Abalos said.

However, a check with the Comelec showed that the special elections in the seven municipalities of Lanao del Sur was held only yesterday.

Asked how big the lead of Biazon was, Abalos mumbled a figure—27,000. But he quoted the figure after a reporter had said 27,000. **It was not clear if the Comelec** chair meant that it was the actual lead of Biazon or if it was Barbers' gain.

But a Comelec official, who asked not to be named, said Biazon's lead had been widened to about 38,000.

Asked if he was already declaring victory, Biazon said, "You can make that conclusion by undertaking a simple arithmetical computation.

"That's why I presented to you the facts ... expressed in numbers. You can't change numbers, unless you create a miracle," he said.

White flag

Reached by phone at his home in Sitio Ala Village in Mukas City Barbers said he was not yet waving the white flag.

"Nothing is final yet since the canvassing is still ongoing," said Barbers, a former police officer.

He said "Mathematically will vote for their win because I'm also a Mindanaoan.

"I'm confident that the people will support me, but whatever happens I'm willing [to continue serving them," Barbers said.

The fate of Biazon may finally be known tomorrow as the Comelec resumes its canvass of votes today in its office in Intramuros, Manila.

Abalos said he expected the COCs from Cotabato City and the provinces in Lanao del Sur to arrive today.

"The last ones that we said to be clear [by all don't know the outcome ...] Pwe can get the CoCs [today], we will finish [tomorrow]," Abalos said.

Proclamation

The other day, Abalos said that if the CoCs arrived in Manila by Friday (today), the proclamation of the 12th senator might be held tonight.

On Monday, the Comelec proclaimed the 11 winning senators at the Philippine International Convention Center.

The canvassing in Cotabato had been delayed by the withdrawal of election returns in the area because of threats to their lives. At least three sets of members of the Board of Canvassers had been sent to Cotabato City the past days.

The first set of election officers asked to be relieved after receiving threats while the second set was able to canvass some election returns for one night but in recent days flew back to Manila after getting death threats.

The canvassing of election returns in Cotabato is being done by the third set of election officials, Abalos said yesterday.

Special elections

The Comelec earlier conducted special elections in seven Lanao del Sur municipalities after several hundreds of election supervisors were unable to perform their functions because of death threats. The special elections were held yesterday.

Biazon said he was shocked if Barbers by 10,743 votes based on the total number of votes received in all 36 precincts (it had by that 10,615 votes while Barbers had 10,580,201).

But a justified report on the canvassing of votes in Cotabato, covering 285 out of 327 precincts, showed that he got 9,367 votes, while Barbers received 13,741 votes, for a difference of 4,626 votes. (The camp of Biazon by other claims that he got 13,000 of the 127,000 votes in the city) votes while Barbers had 13,741).

Adding it to Barbers's totals, Biazon said he was leading by a much as 42,369 votes.

"We are still waiting for the results of the remaining 300 precincts presently being canvassed in Cotabato City. The other results of votes not yet canvassed are the results from the municipalities of Lanao del Sur that account for about 38,000 votes," he said.

Friends

The other day, both Biazon and Barbers promised to remain friends whatever the outcome of the elections.

Biazon yesterday said that he was "really saddened" that he and a friend and fellow K-4 candidate had to compete this way.

"But you know, the realities of life are that it is the people that [senators who should sit in the Senate]," he said.

Did he expect a close fight?

"Probably," said Biazon, who noted that Malacañang had kept a hands-off policy [as] subsequent because are belong to the same political group, which is K-4," he said.

Cebu . . .

From page A1

habitat to pray for stability. (Former President Cory Aquino wrote a prayer for an **honest count, see Page A23.)**

Vidal said in a homily Tuesday night that prayers would calm the fury emotions of those who doubt the credibility of the May 10 elections.

"The Spirit of God will give us enlightenment. We should not just pray for our heads to prevail. I hope that we do not turn our[selves] such who May broken relationships had," Vidal said.

"For us to attain unity we should look out for the growth of our pan our but of all. We should be prepared to sacrifice our well being for the welfare of all," he said.

Vidal affirmed the Mass held to mark the transfer of the "Sto City of God" from the Archbishop's Palace to the Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral.

He put up the text clip in February to allow Church-based groups to conduct vigils for honest and peaceful elections.

"It is by gathering together in prayer that we will know the truth, especially those of us who are confused, "Vidal said.

In Bacolod, Bishop Fernando Capalla said he prayers for sobriety and a clean and honest canvass of the votes.

"Let us not make hasty judgments. Let us respect the limited powers for the canvass of election returns for the sake of the country," he said.

Signature campaign

But Diosdado Carlos Mercado, regional coordinator of Bangon Pilipinas, said he which he and other party members were heading the call for prayer, they would push through with a signature campaign for their standard bearer, Eddie Villanueva.

"We agree with Cardinal Vidal that we should pray for peace and unity. But it why we have been silent. We will speak up so the people [hear and for me. We will not go to the streets," Mercado said.

However, he said, Bangon Pilipinas had started its nationwide campaign in determine how many people had actually voted for Villanueva.

"We just want to know by ourselves," he said.

Mercado said his group did not know what would happen with the canvass to be conducted by Congress. "So of now, we are praying and waiting for the results," he said.

Patriots

Iglesia Filipina Independiente Bishop Benjamin Tipka, head of the administrative [and group Bantay ng Bayan Dividend, also rallied for prayers for an honest canvass.

Speaking yesterday at a press conference, Tipka invited like-minded groups and individuals to join Pantay in ensuring that the people's will in the elections would prevail. He denied that the group had formed an alliance with the **Kaalyansa ng Magkakasama Pilipino** of presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

According to Tipka, Pantay is an apolitical movement for peace, justice and good governance.

He also stressed that members of Pantay were not communists, debunking a military intelligence report which said that Pantay was allied with the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Fr. Romeo Empedrino, a Catholic priest who was present at the press conference, said the group had received various complaints of electoral fraud, including alleged vote-buying in Region Occidental.

"If these things are left unchallenged, they will just add to the culture of demoralization and poverty, which will erode our morality and values," Empedrino said.

He said the aim of Pantay is to defend the values and dignity of the Filipino people as children of God.

Opposition to zero in on 15 CoCs

From page A1

Congress sitting as the National Board of Canvassers.

Given that the CoCs to be questioned were not that many, Escudero said, it would not be necessary for the opposition to compare those with the election returns at city or provincial CoCs.

"All those documents are in the custody of Congress, so if any party has some doubts on the CoC being canvassed, it would be easy to look at them," he said.

In the course of the deliberations on the joint rules, Pimentel sought the transfer of the ballot boxes in the Senate to the House of Representatives.

Replying to Pimentel's queries, Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said there were 2,400 boxes containing election returns for senators in the upper chamber's custody.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said he had already issued an order to transfer the election returns to the House as soon as the police and military were ready to do so.

But Sen. Juliet Arroyo said it would be impossible for Congress or the National Board of Canvassers to touch on the election returns.

Arroyo said it is the Supreme Court, acting as the Presidential Electoral Tribunal, that could entertain election returns in the event a protest is filed.

PAPAARIS to-in-battle, policemen are deployed near the Batasang Pambansa for the duration of the joint session of Congress, which is set quite prepared to canvass the votes for president and vice president. —

Dilangalen again

For the second straight day, Maguindanao Rep. Didagen Dilangalen delayed the session of the joint rules by claiming possible illegalities (vote-padding and cheating) in the CoCs that were brought to Congress.

What started as a smooth "natural delibate" following the brief Wednesday night would have turned into another marathon spectacle had not cooler heads intervened.

In his interpellation, Dilangalen insisted that the proposed joint rules should allow members to compare the results in the CoCs with those in the election returns in case of discrepancies.

But Eastern Samar Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. and told Dilangalen that the opposition could always file a protest with the tribunal, and that if he wanted to, the body could proceed with the opening of the ballot boxes as he could compare the discrepancies.

The angered Dilangalen, who asked why the presiding officers had allowed Andaya to "make a privilege speech in the middle of my interpellation."

Dilangalen then went on to question the credibility of the election results in other areas like Cebu, which raised an uproar among Cebu congressmen.

Shouting, he asked why the majority blocked the questioning of opposition members every time they tried to expose discrepancies in the results.

"When we're exposing the discrepancies, you don't allow it," he said. "Open ang pagsuri! (This is oppressive). Zubiri, senador ko si Jose de Venecia ee maltrato at pagalitan siyeee! (Zubi [is the Senate president] that he would be booed out and President Macapagal would cheer him out)!"

He then blew his top and questioned those who were opposing his views, prompting the presiding officers to suspend the session for a few minutes.

When the session resumed, several congressmen accused their Dilangalen's acquaintances my remarks he stricken off the record. De Venecia supported the motion.

But first, Vicente Sotto protested, saying the Venecia should have not hauled the guard because he was still asking which statements of Dilangalen were considered unparliamentary.

The congressman from Cebu then took turns lambasting Dilangalen for implying that the elections were marred by cheating.

Tiresome discussions

The wrangling in Congress is perhaps the only snag-prone that people nationwide no longer want to see, Bangon Pilipinas spokesperson Luis Lizon said.

According to Lizon, the public has grown tired of the arguments of lawmakers since the chronicle impeachment trial of then President Joseph Estrada, which had held US auditorium captive in December 2000.

"What's happening in Congress now is not something to be surprised about. People are really getting tired of what's happening in Congress. The endless discussions, the grandstanding ..." Lizon said, trailing off at a press briefing at the party's media office in Makati.

"We expected all the drama that is going on to unfold. We've seen it before. We've followed it and there's nothing new," he said, adding that Bangon Pilipinas was not really affected by the delay in canvassing.

The fledgling party's standard-bearer, evangelist Eduardo Villanueva, had said he was not interested in winning the presidential race anymore but in exposing the ranch and grazing justice for the victims of electoral fraud.

Villanueva made last in the "quick count" of the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections.

Distrust

Malacañang joined those expressing dismay over the delay in the official canvass.

"The more the process is delayed, the more we prejudice the public's right to know the truth, the more we invite distrust in the democratic system that we all cherish," the Macapagal's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

Bunye expressed the hope that Congress would soon approve the canvass rules that would be acceptable to both the administration and the opposition.

He had earlier endorsed the canvass by a joint committee of the Senate and the House as the "correct process" observed in law and tradition.

"We are also optimistic that the actual canvassing will be started within this week," Bunye said.

Bunye also denied canvassing the lawmakers' pork barrel funds to expedite the canvass.

"We are not involved in any form of horse-trading in the midst of the transparency standoff in the legislature," he said.

He was reacting to reports that Ms Macapagal had first reached the release of the second tranche of the pork barrel funds of congressmen and provided the amount of funds that they would utilize for general use.

This was supposedly meant to get the lawmakers' approval of the Macapagal's preferred mode of canvassing—the 14-member committee instead of the plenary.

Bunye said the allegations were "preposterous and loaded with malicious intent.

"We respect the independence of Congress as an institution and we will not, in any way, intervene in its affairs, especially as canvassing proceedings are serving the highest post in the land," he said.

Blazon's advice

Adding to the brouhaha, cardiologist Dra. Rodolfo Blazon urged lawmaker Loren Legarda, Noli de Castro and Panfilo Lacson to inhibit themselves from the canvass.

At a press conference, Blazon, who is banging on "by his fingernails" to the 12th slot of the senatorial race, said the three should "do the honorable" and avoid any conflict of the canvass if they heeded his advice.

Legarda and De Castro, who both ran for vice president, have been attending the joint session.

But Lacson, who ran for president, had yet to show up, noted Blazon, who theorized that Lacson might also be considering inhibiting himself.

Blazon said that even if the three chose to waive their right to canvass the votes, they could serve as observers and "probably protect their interests not as members of the National Board of Canvassers but as candidates who are seeing to it that their interests are also protected." With reports from Blondie F. Rivera, Michael Lim Ubac and Juliet Labog-Javellana

JDV apologizes to nation for 'shut up' . . .

From page A1

THE NOTE that got Rep. Dilangalen all hot under the collar came a woman in the gallery.

irregulars because the latter was only doing his duty as a lawmaker—not censure personally—and should not have had the right of free expression.

"But while that is acknowledged, we seek decorum on the floor and we also ask the cheering from the gallery, so we can concentrate on it now," he said.

Senate President Franklin Drilon dismissed complaints of Dilangalen that the leaders of Congress did not act decisively on Dilangalen's demand that the observer who had interrupted the vote, later identified as Socorro Pido, be ejected for contempt.

The vote said: "Shut up. You're wasting our time. Taxpayers of the Philippines."

Drilon told reporters that one could not prevent an observer from putting notes to a member of Congress because this had become commonplace.

"What the mere remote is beyond the control of anyone," he said.

Asked how such an incident could be prevented, Drilon said Congress leaders could only appeal to their colleagues "to allow the process to take place."

"We are representative and sensitive but the right to stand up and express his views. That is their right as members of the legislature. We can only appeal to their sense of statesmanship," Drilon said.

Losing his cool

Gonzales was presiding over the joint session in behalf of De Venecia and Senate President Pro Tempore Aquilino Pimentel Jr. when Dilangalen's removal from the session hall and the suspension of the joint session by Drilon and De Venecia.

Dilangalen, then interpellating Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, lost his cool after reading the note passed to him by a page from Pido.

He shouted at Gonzales, asking what he had done to secure such a note and demanded that Pido be cited for contempt.

Gonzales ignored Dilangalen's demand, but advised the observers in the gallery that communication notes are not allowed inside the Session Hall. It was at this point that Dilangalen shouted "Shut up!" 10 times at Gonzales, saying he was also censoring his freedom of expression.

Pido later said she had wanted Congress to proceed with the canvass as mandated by the Constitution because the people want to know the results of the presidential and vice presidential elections.

She said she was a supporter of President Macapagal-Arroyo and a member of a community movement in Paranaque. Her story above at right.]

Restricted movements

The incident has resulted in the restriction of the movements of observers as well as journalists covering the joint session.

De Venecia also told reporters that he would impose a ban "for the moment" on the transmission of notes to lawmakers from observers in the gallery.

"We don't want any more occasion for misunderstandings or upset anxious to delay or derail the canvass," he said, thereby before the joint session resumed.

House Deputy Secretary General Emmanuel Alfonso issued a reminder that people in the gallery must observe proper decorum under pain of removal from the Session Hall.

He said reporters would no longer be allowed on the floor of the Session Hall and in the South Lounge when the session is ongoing or suspended.

If they wish to interview any member of Congress, he said, they should do so in designated areas where the session is suspended, he said.

Photographers are likewise no longer allowed to go to the Session Hall to the House Hall, he added.

No comment

Malacañang declined to comment on Pido's actions.

Ricardo Saludo, deputy spokesperson for Ms Macapagal, said it was up to congressmen to tackle the matter.

But Ignacio Bunye, Ms Macapagal's spokesperson, took the Drilon to personally deny to Dilangalen that he had any communication with Pido.

The two men are both members of the Aquilo Lapi fraternity.

"Brod Digs, the one who passed the note to you is neither my relative nor a member of my staff," Bunye said in a text message to Dilangalen.

He said he met Pido in 1986 but he had not seen or talked to her recently.

Dilangalen seemed pleased by Bunye's statement. With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Juliet Labog-Javellana

No ordinary taxpayer

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE WOMAN who caused a furor in Congress is an ordinary taxpayer.

Socorro Pido, a graduate of the University of the Philippines, once held a sensitive position in the Palace—as social secretary of then President Corazon Aquino.

"I'm glad for her. She's very brave," Aquino's spokesperson, Deedee Siytangco, said yesterday, adding:

"She was just articulating what the others felt in the gallery. She has a right to voice her sentiments."

Siytangco expressed agreement with the position of Congress leaders that what Pido had done was not cause for a citation for contempt: "She did not stand up and wave a placard, she [just] sent a note."

Siytangco also said Maguindanao Rep. Didagen Dilangalen and other lawmakers should not be so easily-offended as to reject a courtesy conveyed by this area.

In an interview early last night with GMA 7, Pido denied any connection with President Macapagal-Arroyo.

She said she had campaigned and voted for Ms Macapagal, but that she went to observe the proceedings in Congress "on my own as a citizen."

She reiterated that she was standing by what she did, and added: "I will not apologize."

She also said that if there was anyone who "shamed Congress," it was Dilangalen and not herself.

Curiously, another woman who once caused a similar furor in the Senate is now leading the pro-Ms Pido bold during the Aquino administration.

When she assumed the presidency after the Edsa II uprising in January 2001, Ms Macapagal took in Bettina Rhodes as her social secretary.

Rhodes earlier Abadía had inherited since then, Melissa Robinson Santiago during the Senate impeachment trial of President Joseph Estrada.

Santiago complained that Rhodes used a friend had roared and made havoc at her while she was defending Estrada.

The reason had the two women ejected from the Session Hall.

Prayer for a true and speedy canvass

By Corazon C. Aquino

[The following prayer was written by the former President to serve as an inspiration to lawmakers preparing to canvass the votes for president and vice president. ED.]

DEAR Jesus, Prince of Peace,

I ask You in Mass so, so that we will continue to enjoy Your favor.

Listen to our prayer and hear our cry for help, as we await the official canvass by Congress for the highest offices in the land.

Give us the patience to wait out the honest count on the Canvassing Committee.

Give us the understanding to appreciate the issues, the discrepancies we call the real from the false.

Inspire our legislators to address our doubts with clarity and patience, favoring that a gentle answer turns away wrath, and the tongue of the wise brings healing.

This important work of Congress will be hard and tedious, but a sincere desire for the truth will help rather than hinder the speed of the canvass.

Confident in Your great mercy, dear Lord, we believe Your people will do their best.

Therefore, let every word spoken in Congress bring understanding instead of delay, calm rather than stoke uncertainty, and a humble acceptance instead of any pride, that we may embrace the reality that comes only with justice, and the freedom that springs only from truth. Amen.

METRO
Edna Antonio S. Ubarra

SUERTRES 0 4 2
SIX DIGIT 1 9 6 1 8 4
SUPERLOTTO 6/49 20 21 38 40 48

Parents oppose high school's closure

By Tina G. Santos

THE PRAMOUNT of a school that is said to have produced its best and brightest looks imminent, but to students that have been thankfully swapping to-do lists so far four years—and getting best sets...the fight is not yet over.

Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. assured students of De Paz U Kalaw Annex High School that the phaseout would only happen after everyone graduates.

"No classes shall be disrupted during the phaseout process," Belmonte said. "Parents and students have nothing to worry about."

But they are anxious, and are hoping school authorities would take a closer look.

Loreta, 15, an incoming junior, said Pura Kalaw Annex is a good school, and she would like to see her two siblings enrolled at Bahaginas Elementary School and for other children in the community to be able to experience quality education the same way she had. "Ban hem could also be possible if school officials close it down instead of making it better?" she lamented.

Belmonte also clarified that there was never a Pura Kalaw Annex High School. "What we have is just De Pura Kalaw Elementary School. What residents were referring to as Pura Kalaw Annex High School is an extension of another school."

Ken's Tolentino, principal of Pura Kalaw Elementary School, told the Inquirer that Kalaw Annex High School is an extension of the Jose P. Laurel High School, 300 meters across Kalaw. The Annex was named so because it is actually the three-factory component of the Kalaw Elementary School. Tolentino explained, adding that the name stuck in phaseout is now considered related.

"It has already been resolved by the education department and the city government. The gradual phaseout would push through," she said.

According to the plan, students will be allowed to finish their high school course, but no new enrollees would be accepted. To date, the school has at 320 third and fourth year students. Each section has at least 50 pupils, with the teacher-student ratio at 1:50.

Kalaw High School occupies nine classrooms in one of the four buildings of Kalaw Elementary School.

Inevitable

Residents have been fighting the inevitable closure of the school since last year, after the Division of City Schools, the Department of Education, and the local government had come up with the decision that it closes, allegedly for lack of facilities and classrooms.

Now they are hoping that the education department and the city administration would narrow the school's performance and its merits, which they claimed could justify its existence and consequently, its revivification.

The Division of City Schools under Quezon City District Superintendent Victoria Fuentes earlier claimed that the school also lacked the necessary papers to operate. "Kalaw does not even have a computer laboratory or other amenities required for a high school," Fuentes said.

Ranked 7th

But the parents pointed out that the school ranked 7th in performance out of the 42 high schools in the city last year. It is one of nine high schools in Project 4, a community of 13 barangays with a population of over 100,000.

They added that Kalaw was built only in 2000, but it had already distinguished itself as a "quality school," with a vision of becoming an integrated school that would maximize resources, set standards for quality basic education, and respond to the educational needs of the city residents.

However, Tolentino, who was for the phaseout, said the situation had "deprived legitimate Kalaw elementary students of the use of the school facilities," adding that it would not be possible for it to become an integrated school. "To be called an integrated school, it should be independent and it should not be located near another high school. But Kalaw and Jose P. Laurel are only a few meters apart, and in fact, are only separated by an alley," she said.

Incoming high school students could enroll at the Jose P. Laurel High School, where a three-story school building is now under construction to accommodate the students.

Missing the point

Last year, Jose P. Laurel High School, with a teacher-student ratio at 1:20, had more than 1,000 students.

But the students, parents and some concerned groups are saying the city government and the education department are missing the point.

"The issue here is about closing down a good school. What we were lamenting was the unexplained closure of a school due to problems with [the] city regulations, as mother with two children who study at Kalaw.

(Continued tomorrow)

Garcia; 84

SUSANA Somoso Garcia died on May 11 at the age of 84.

She is survived by husband, Jose Y. Garcia, children Susana and Julia Pedrajo, Wanda and Ichel Sevilla, grandchildren and great grandchildren. They request prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Garcia's remains have been transferred to Cagan, Nueva Ecija, on Thursday. Interment will be tomorrow at the Cagan Memorial Garden after the 9 a.m. mass.

Robinsons Supermarket
big Supercenter
Nestlé
Present
Summer wheels to GO
PROMO PERIOD: May 1 to August 31, 2004
Buy
Drop
and get a chance to WIN!
8 Honda City 1.3 M/T
to be given away
NIDO

Tanong ng Bayan
Balik-Tanaw
Sugod! 3 mukha ng kabayanihan
ABC

Malabon residents bear stinking effect of polls

ANYTHING GOES
An enterprising woman goes around Manila selling many kinds, which she keeps in a cage. She exemplifies Filipinos who find creative ways of earning a living. AFP

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

MALABON residents are suffering under a "dazzling array dazzling (acid and) solid" effects of the recent elections.

But they are not complaining of pockets of waste but of growing piles of garbage. The collection of which was neglected due to the court of the polls.

Along Basa-Basa Street in Barangay Longos, residents are worried that discarded plastic, bales' diapers, decomposing rats or dogs and other refuse would soon flooding into their homes once the rains come.

Always flooded

Barangay Longos gets flooded when the tide sets in. And the situation gets worse when rain accompanies the rising tide.

The small mound of garbage at the corner of Longaray Street has grown into a three-foot high heap that stretches 50 meters down Basa-Basa.

Ironically, the sign on the wall above the pile scrawls in hard-nail letters: "Bawal Magtapon ng Basura."

"The government has neglected us," Basa-Basa resident Marlyn Bacta, 34, said as she waved her hand several times to drive flies away.

Calls unheeded

Bacta had been calling City Hall and the city waste management department for the past two months to collect the garbage and stop people from adding to the heaping pile of rubbish.

She lamented that the trash are thrown on their street by people from neighboring Navotas and Caloocan.

The situation took a turn for the worse after April 29, when the canvass of Ilaw Bualing Election, the city's private garbage collector, expired.

Dagdag-sahig Mayor Jaypee Bartolo blamed the city council for the existing problem. "They failed to act immediately," he said.

Wait-and-see

The situation apparently went at until the polling was over to see whether they could get another term, and Bartolo's supporters who took over Mayor Amado Noncio when the latter was suspended for a year in October last year.

Pro-election, Bartolo has the support of several barangays.

Councilor Cielo Torres said they prepared for a building right after the garbage collection contract expired but had to undergo a seminar to prepare for the new procurement law (RA 9184).

In a special session Tuesday, the council decided to extend the contract until June 30.

However, Bartolo said garbage collection might resume only after three to four days.

Cash helps in cleanup of barangays

By Margaux C. Grey

MANY and seemingly have-done wonders in the cleanup drive in post-election Muntinlupa City.

Instead of leaving the task of scraping off, scaring down and hosing off posters and other campaign materials to city workers, Mayor Jaime Fresnedi presented the task to barangay officials and residents.

Heads together

"Even before the elections, (s)I already discussed with the barangay captains how impossible it is to leave the cleanup to the sweepers," Fresnedi said in a phone interview.

What happened, Fresnedi said, was the basis of the city's nine barangays got together and came up with a scrutiny way of undertaking the cleanup project.

"The barangay officials took cash from their own funds for the removal crews," Fresnedi said.

Cleanest areas

In the end, seven areas in the empty Fresnedi won P1,000 each for winning all-campaign materials.

The cleanest areas are Poong Malakpan, Don Bosco and Tunasan, Ayala Vills., Bagong Ilihan, Block 16, Munting Bayan and Block 17.

Barangay Poblacion's clean and green task force worked hand-in-hand with the street sweepers of President Ilio rampaged dumps.

Barangay Bayanan, on the other hand, bought some trucks to help in its post-election efforts.

The rain-trucks will be used later to collect garbage in the area, Fresnedi said.

"The people have to help the local government in bringing back the city to its original clean state," Fresnedi said.

Hard time

But the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (Task Force Basura) complained that its men were having a hard time cleaning up the mess left behind by the Oct. 11 election campaign.

He sought the help of local governments in the cleanup.

METROBRIEFS

Fake domestic

THE CHIEF, investigation and detection group arrested a lady domestic helper for allegedly stealing cash in Quezon City last Wednesday. Angel Rodriguez and his 20 man team were caught intercepting the female crime (illegible) and arresting them at Sto. Niño de Jesus at around 1:30 p.m. Christine T. Esguerra

'Para Nila'

"PARA NILA," a benefit show for the ailing Rizal-RIZ Sandoval, had suffered in a recent accident and hemorrhaged. Stephanie Layne, will be staged by Nina Concepcion on Saturday, May 29, at 7 p.m. at the Cuneta Astrodome in Pasay City. Among the artists who will perform in a Nina Jimmy Bondoc, Luke Mejares, Gino Padilla, Carlo Martinez, Kuh, Ebe Dancel, Jamie Rivera, the Monteverde, the 167-196, Eheet and the children of Sandoval.

New PriceSmart

PRICESMART, the US-based membership warehouse, is set to open its fourth location in the Philippines on June 3 at the Subic Bay Freeport Zone at the Dinalupihan Municipal Complex in Pampanga City. Other locations of PriceSmart are at Fort Bonifacio Global City in Taguig, on Congressional Avenue in Quezon City, and at the Mind Cebu Development, Filinvest Corporate City in Alabang, Muntinlupa.

Death of Noli publicist shocks family

JUDGE and the family of slain Ilio S de Castro publicist Eli Bonifacio.

She was too kind to deserve that," Gerry Bermudez, Ello nephew from his elder brother Eli, told the broadcaster.

"They (Eli and the hot uncle. He will surely miss him," Gerry added.

The Bermudez family, who hails from Cuenca City, are now asking authorities to immediately arrest the man who strangled, repeatedly stabbed and even cored to death the publicity worker.

Free spirit

Gerry, also the provincial news correspondent of news tabloid People's Journal in Quezon, described his uncle as a "free spirit who showed hard to achieve his dream."

"He courageously left home in search of his own destiny with his firm belief that he would also make it big and have a place of his own in the big city. With his guts and perseverance, he was able to fulfill his ambition," he said.

On Wednesday morning, Eli's body was discovered by his cleaner lying on the floor of the bathroom inside his bedroom on the third floor of Unit 4, Villa La Estanislawa on Camilla Street near Gilmore Avenue, Barangay New Manila.

Gerry said the last time that they spent quality time with his uncle was during the election campaign period.

"He told me that he would run for reelection because his constituents gave him encouragement based on the fact that Cuenca was left in shambles by their parents," he said.

Brother's bid

The victim also fully supported the reelection bid of his brother, Oli, a former Quezon board member, during the last election. The bid, however, failed.

"He was so close to my father. That's why whenever he sent words that he would visit us, my father would always prepare Tyrone's favorite dinuguan," the nephew said.

"Before he left, he never forgot to hand me his last a bank check as financial help. He was generous to a fault. Pahaging buto-ang bulan sa mountain mangangalis ngan," Gerry recalled.

Roots

Eli's had his humble beginnings at Barangay Cutta in the outskirts of Lucena City. He was the youngest in the brood of seven.

He earned his college degree from a Catholic school here.

Dem disclosed that they would bring Eli's remains to Lucena City today or tomorrow.

He has lots of friends and associates here. They also went to see him for the last time," he said.

Chief Criminal Police Director extended his sympathy to the family of the suspect in the killing of Ilio Bonifacio, even as it ruled out the political angle as the motive behind the incident.

"We're not into the political angle," CPD director Chief Supt. Napoleon Guerra, told Inquirer, adding that they're actually looking at robbery.

Suspect's description

Resistencia's driver Evelyn Pineda and caretaker Reynaldo Santiago described the suspect as between 25 to 28 years old, has fair complexion and medium built, dressed in T-shirt and jeans.

The police are looking for a man who reportedly looked like actress Sue Ramirez.

On Wednesday evening, the police questioned a man who fit the description of the suspect but released him after Pineda and Santiago ascribed he was not the man who stayed over Resistencia's house the day he was killed. Dino Ramos and Evelyn T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Carrier COMBURA ABENSON

Abenson

Carrier FCA055PP
5 HP with 12 hour on/off timer
P 8,999
P 1,499.83/mo. for 6 mos.

Carrier FCA075BP
7.5 HP with manual rotary knobs
R-22/EER
P 12,499
P 2,083.17/mo. for 6 mos.

Carrier FCA095PP
10 HP with 12 hour on/off
P 14,372
P 2,395.33/mo. for 6 mos.

is Carrier's

COMBURA FCC055BP
5.0 HP with
manual rotary knobs
P 7,995
P 1,332.50/mo. for 6 mos.

COMBURA FCC085BP
8.0 HP with
manual rotary knobs
P 12,495
P 2,082.50/mo. for 6 mos.

COMBURA MCC115BP
11.25 HP with
manual rotary knobs
P 13,499
P 2,249.83/mo. for 6 mos.

It's on
0% Interest Installment
all Carrier and Condura
room aircons 1.25HP and
below (manual, deluxe or remote)
at 0% installment on
major credit cards.

Dealer of the Year.

Carrier 42RFA009
1.0 HP split type
high wall mounted
with timer
P 24,169

Carrier 42RFA013
1.0 HP split type
high wall mounted
with timer
P 27,268

That's why we have lots of exciting deals.

ABENSON
All About Appliances.

Promo Period: March 15 - May 15, 2004

BUSINESS

E-mail at: business@inquirer.com.ph
Website: www.inq7.net/biz.htm

Editor Raul C. Marvilla
Assistant Editor Cecile S. Mariano

MORE TIME FOR GARMENT EXPORTERS

WTO urged to defer quota scrapping

By Bunnie W. Dechalgo

THE CONFEDERATION of Garments Exporters of the Philippines (Congep) yesterday announced to lead signed with 76 other exporters' groups from 36 countries a petition seeking a three-year deferment of the removal of the export quota system for garments and textile.

The petition will be filed soon with the World Trade Organization.

The 1995 Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) under the WTO—which groups 146 member-nations—provided for the gradual integration or removal of the quota within 10 years, or specifically, Jan. 1, 2005. This means that by January next year, the quota system will be completely removed.

Garment and textile exporters from the 36 countries want the date moved to 2008 to cite all China's unfair advantage.

Congep chair Ronald Ong said in a press briefing that the signatories of the petition, dubbed the Istanbul Declaration, took into account the dramatic changes in the circumstances associated with the quota phase-out process ensured by the entry of China into the WTO in January 2002.

"If quotas are removed in 2005, China will unfairly control two-thirds of the world's garment and textile exports in actuality," Ong said. "China currently accounts for 40 percent of the global garment exports and it is continuously growing."

He said the entry of China into the WTO as well as its efforts, were not considered when the 1995 ATC was adopted.

"It took us 10 years to collapse our quotas, while China entered the system only in 2002," Ong said. "We think we need another three years to level all the differences."

The two-page Istanbul Declaration, addressed to the WTO director general, pointed out that the garment and textile sector "has been compromised by the use of trade distorting practices in a few dominant countries."

It went on to say that such practices include deliberate currency undervaluation, state subsidies and "the performance of non-performing loans and robust schemes.

"Unscrupulous have allowed China to drop their prices of textile and apparel by as much as 7% percent, giving it an unreasonable and unfair advantage in world markets by textiles and clothing," the petition said.

The document proposed that the WTO members make a full review of global textile and clothing production, market circumstances to find out whether to finalize the phase-out of quotas by Jan. 1, 2008 or make an alternative arrangement.

Also, the paper urge the WTO to hold an extraordinary session to discuss the proposal not later than July 1 this year.

Asked whether time was too tight for the suggestion, Ong said first what the signatories wanted was for the major importing nations like the United States and the European Union to initiate some action that would ensure trade did not get counteracted on any particular country.

He added that the finalized declaration was at this stage purely a private-sector initiative and that the WTO's government sector has not taken any action on the matter.

The 76 signatories included five American industry groups and seven associations from EU member countries. There were also signatories representing the members in Asia, Africa and South America.

EXPORTERS threatened by China's dominance in the world market

Roderick Gomez, courier
Monthly income 2000. Downpayment: 15-year term
P1,800 monthly amortization: 15-year term

"Dahil sa Pag-IBIG Fund, natupad ang pangarap naming magkaroon ng sariling bahay. Kalunyan, mas mababa pa ang monthly amortization ko ngayon sa dating upa ko sa maliit na kuwarto."

Isa si Roderick Gomez sa 46,499 na empleyadong Pilipino na natulungan ng Pag-IBIG Fund na magkaroon ng sariling tahanan, nong nakaraang taon. Dahil sa mababang loan interest rate, kayang-kaya binyaran ang monthly amortization.

Ang housing loan interest rates ng Pag-IBIG ay ang pinakamababa ngayon sa merkado, mula 6% hanggang 12% bawat taon lamang, depende sa halaga ng iyong utangan.

Ito ang sagot ng pamunuan ni PRESIDENT GLORIA sa kahilingan ng maraming nating kababayan – isang programa sa pabahay na abot-kaya ng lahat.

Si GMA at Pag-IBIG Fund, katuwang n'yo sa kinabukasan.

http://www.pagibigfund.gov.ph

Guidelines for good governance ignored

By Ernesto Ordoñez

"[XXXXX] proper pricing and timing of government imports." This is a key item in the seven-page summary of the agricultural agenda formulated by the Alyansa Agrikultura through nationwide consultations for over a year.

This item also agreed upon by all the presidential candidates when it was presented to them prior to the May 11 elections. This item implies that the government and private sector work closely together in the control of a vested Philippines Inc., similar to Japan Inc.

Gregorio San Diego, president of the Federasi Broiler Raisers Association (Fbra) and an Alyansa Agrikultura leader, said that this teamwork did not happen a few days ago. This was when the Department of Agriculture announced a change in rules for an extra 10 million kilos of poultry importations.

Commentary

This it will below the current prevailing prices of P115.

San Diego says, "The solution is for the government not to punish the producers who are already suffering from much higher input costs, but to instead implement the price tag and anti-profiteering laws in addressing unscrupulous retailers."

Today, there are hardly any poultry price tags in the wet markets, in violation of the law. A suggested retail price of poultry P100-P106 per Kilo has not been announced. There is therefore no hands for charging unscrupulous retailers with profiteering.

"If the price were down from P115 to even P106, there may be no need for government intervention in additional imports to bring down prices," said Ano Braga. He added that, what makes matter worse is that imports will arrive 45 days from now or the earliest the mid-July is reasonably a safe market. The domestic supply will be more than sufficient to cover this darkened demand.

"The 5 million imported kilos will replace an equivalent amount of domestically produced chicken. Under the generous assumption of one person being able to produce 3,000/kilos, 1,000 jobs will be lost," San Diego added.

Background

Alarmed by the rising retail prices of chicken from P65-P96 a kilo in May last year to P115 this month, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) officials sought the DA's intervention in the importation of more chicken.

The good news is that the DA said it would not allow zero tariff poultry importation. A few days later, the DA announced the importation of 10 million kilos under 3 million from July to August, and a standby 5 million from September to December. This would have the 40 percent tariff under the Minimum Access Volume (MAV) provision, which would equated the currently allowed 20 million kilos to 20 percent. This was done in spite of the fact that today only 7.7 million kilos or 54 percent of the current MAV allocation has been used.

"The bad news," San Diego said, "is that the two guidelines for good governance have not been followed: Implement the current system of bans and quantities, and consult adequately with the private sector before this system is changed."

Implementing current system

In May 2003, a poultry integrator sold to a retailer chickens at P77 per kilo. Today this integrator sells at P68 a kilo. This is a 14-percent increase. However, since the cost of corn has increased by 50 percent and the cost of soybean by 79 percent, the integrator's profit has gone down from 97 to only 51. 46 per kilo. This is because the integrator did not pass all his costs on the retailer in an effort to minimize the cost increase.

The result is a very low 1.7 percent return for the integrator. It does not even include interest cost, and therefore cannot be sustainable in the long run. Assuming a 5% margin between the integrator and the retailer price, which has proven to be the case in the past, the market retail price today should be P106.

Consultation

But even if there may be a severe shortage in July, the stated guideline of good governance is adequate private sector consultation. DA-called poultry integrators and commercial raisers in an initial consultation last May 26. They were asked to submit their status and forecast of poultry supply. They submitted this after the meeting, rejecting a follow-up consultation when the integrated supply numbers would be compared to the forecasted demand. They

CONTINUED ON

Compaq Presario 2503 Notebook
PhP49,950.00
Experience mobile convenience, for only P49,950.
intel inside celeron
FOR MORE INFO
Call (632) 867- 3557
Or Toll-free 1- 800 -1331- 4488
Or email ph.contact@hp.com
COMPAQ
hp invent

ADB to back up loans to poor countries

SINGAPORE—The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide political and commercial risk guarantees to international banks bold enough to open credit lines to the region's poorest and riskiest countries, bank officials said.

The guarantees provided under the Trade Finance Facilitation Program, which was launched here last Wednesday, aims to encourage global banks to fund imports by countries seen as vulnerable to crises or not normally known as profitable markets.

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam are among the countries that could benefit from the $150-million program.

Bank officials said it is part of the Manila-based ADB's goal to reduce poverty in Asia, which is still home to two-thirds of the world's poor despite its robust economic growth rates.

More than 40 international banks, including top lenders from the United States, Japan and Europe, have committed to participate in the program, which highlights ADB's role as a catalyst for private funds.

Asia's poorest countries normally have a difficult time getting credit lines from international banks to finance imports of goods and machinery which are crucial inputs for their later exports, because of perceived political or commercial risks.

"The concern we have for weaker developing countries is many of them can't import the capital goods they need, for instance to process fruit up to [international] standards for export," said Martin Bronfenbrenner, a senior official in charge of this at the ADB.

"So our job is to help the importer's bank establish its credibility with the exporter's bank so that they will be given the time necessary to buy the machinery, use the machinery profitably and then make the exports."

Bronfenbrenner said that in times of crisis, the first thing bankers in London, Paris, Tokyo or New York are likely to do is cut international trade lines to local banks in the affected countries.

Under the program, ADB ensures that credit lines remain open by offering to guarantee the risks. AFP

NTC directs Star cable group to restore links with Destiny

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE HAGONOY Telecommunications Commission has ordered cable content provider Star Group Ltd. to restore ties with Destiny Cable Inc.

NTC chair Ronald Solis said he is keen to free regional and local officials that Star should make its six channels available again to Destiny subscribers as Star should not discriminate against any cable service provider.

"Offer or make available to Destiny and to all other cable TV operators the programs you carry and distribute in the country," Solis told Star vice president for regional distribution Mary Oh and general manager for the Philippines and Pacific Islands Cara Lubrano.

Star unilaterally revoked its deal with Destiny in October 2002, saying that it was a "business decision."

Sources, however, said that Star cut off ties with Destiny in favor of exclusive arrangements with bigger cable providers.

"Such action was anti-competitive and contrary to sound public policy. It smacks that any cable provider is tantamount to an exclusive arrangement, which requires prior approval of NTC," Solis told Star.

Star operates the highly popular Star World, Star Movies, Star Sports, ESPN, National Geographic and Star Mandarin channels.

Cable channel MIN ties up its ties with Destiny Cable in August 2000 for similar "business reasons."

Destiny Cable is owned by Elena Lim's Ideal Group Inc., which following the merger with Global Cable last year, remains a 25-per-cent market share.

Global Cable sets put up to be early '90s and had managed to increase its market in Manila, Makati, Pasay, Mandaluyong and San Juan despite the strong presence of rival Home Cable.

No fixed-Price

...ING with shrinking patronage, members-only merchandise now allows the general public to shop in any of its three stores in the country.

The small print, however, is that non-members still get hit, each, with a 5-percent surcharge for every purchase made.

The San Diego, California-based chain charges a P1,000 annual fee for "diamond" membership, and P1,500 a year for the business-owner card.

For a P5,000 shopping bill for a non-member, the 5-percent surcharge amounts to an extra P250, or, assuming a monthly shopping expedition, a P3,000 surcharge a year.

Prudential also sees allowing anyone to pay by credit card as a member's bill.

Previously, and to the annoyance of many shoppers, especially families and husband-and-wife who shop together, the name on the credit card must match that of the member-cardholder.

And that is why, in case you have not noticed, the security guards do not even bother now to ask anyone to flash his/her card before allowing entry.

According to the grapevine, the membership club, the first to open foray to enter the country under the Retail Trade Liberalization Act, made the grudging concession to lift the membership barrier after seeing that fewer customers are signing up for its planned membership in the future.

Whereas 12,000 applied to fill up the forms for the opening of its very first store in The Net, only 200 had reportedly done so for the Industria branch last November, prompting the American country managers, Benjamin Woods, to delay the opening, first for April, and then for June 1.

Still, according to the grapevine, only 900 have so far signed up, despite the seven months' delay.

As for 5-percent formula, it is not immediately clear how the San Diego office arrived at the same, but reasonably similar to the so-called "duda ten" that the Makati business district charges their Ayala tenant tenants.

What is clear is that the consortium of Filipino partners, who, including Silverstreak at Waterfront, are said for 40-percent ownership of the local operations, are still chomping at the bit over the direction and management of the business, especially with red ink and over...

COCKTALES

Victor C. Aganon

P1 billion in debts threatening to wipe all of them out.

But that is another story waiting to unfold.

Alabang duress sale

THE ALABANG Country Club will auction the morning four shares, including that of former member Ramon C. Gonzalez, for a minimum price of P1.1 million each.

It is not clear who own the three other shares, only that the owners have unpaid bills were delinquent for over 60 days.

In addition to the bid price, winning bidders shall shoulder the transfer fee of P100,000 per share.

As in any other club, purchase of a share does not guarantee membership.

Heard through the grapevine

THE BOARD of Equitable PCIBank will decide in a special meeting today the proposed pension plan amendments to it bylaws.

The proposed changes had been tabled in Wednesday's regular board meeting, but the new increasingly unloaded SSS-GSIS acronyms, including vice chair Fra...Armand Abaya Fernandez, earnestly asked for more time to study the proposals, considering that the checklist was handed down only the day before by chair Antonio Go.

(Email: cocktails_ph@yahoo.com or ask.jake_ph@hotmail.com)

REAL ESTATE FINANCE & INVESTMENT ANALYSIS
June 4, 5, 9-10*, 11, 4 PM | Cyberpod 3 Plaza, Makati
URBAN INSTITUTE OF REAL ESTATE

PSE income up 30% in Q1

By Elizabeth L. Sánchez

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange looks forward to a profitable year.

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange posted a 29-percent increase in its net income in the first quarter to P2.31 million.

This was mainly due to the reinstatement of transaction fees equivalent to 1.2 of 1 percentage point, the PSE said.

The PSE added in its financial report that operating revenue grew to P20.66 million, up 47 percent from the same period last year.

Membership-related income increased by the bulk of total revenue at P6.4 million.

Income from data feed commission at the tail of the PSE's information database increased by P4.28 million from P1.62 million in the first quarter last year.

On the other hand, operating expenses rose 34 percent to P45.16 million from P32.34 million due to higher manpower costs, increased cost of services, and payment of membership fees to an international federation of stock exchanges.

Non-operating income amounted to P17.53 million or 62 percent of total revenues.

This was higher by 17 percent than the same period last year.

Total revenues closed at P2.32 billion, up 43 percent from P1.07 billion during the same period last year.

SUB-TRANSMISSION ASSETS

Transco open to deferred payments

By Abigail L. Hiz

THE NATIONAL Transmission Corp. (Transco) is considering the proposal of Lopez-led Manila Electric Co. to pay for sub-transmission lines over 20 years.

An official familiar with the matter said Transco recently finished drafting a proposed set of guidelines on deferred payments for assets, which would be presented to the Transco board during its next board meeting.

"The proposed guidelines had already been presented to the Transco board technical committee. Upon approval by the Transco board, this will be submitted to the Energy Regulatory Commission for approval," he said.

The source said these guidelines would be used to determine ceiling rates and other ancillary details for future acquisition of sub-transmission assets by other private distribution utilities, not only Meralco.

Under Republic Act No. 9136 or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira), only electric cooperatives are entitled to deferred payments schemes for asset acquisition.

Meralco power distribution unit Meralco, however, also requested for a similar payment scheme as they face budgetary constraints.

RP gold output up 6%

By Octavio A. Gaylican

THE PHILIPPINES produced 6 percent more gold in the first quarter.

The year-on-year increase in the mineral output of mining giant Lepanto Consolidated Mining Corp. and small-scale miners in Luzon and Mindanao.

Based on the preliminary data of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, small-scale mines produced some 7,721 kilograms of gold while Lepanto's Victoria mine in Benguet contributed some 749 kilograms of gold during this period, the Mines and Geosciences Bureau said.

Adding luster to the gold mining sector are the projections from Philex Mining Corp.'s Padcal Copper project and from four medium scale gold mines: Casecnan Gold Project of PXI Resources, Philippine Amazon Exploration Mining Project of Benguet Corp., Bonanza Development Project of the Balatoc Resources Mining Development Corp. (MRDC), and Paco-cubi Gold Project of Atlas-ic Gold Mining Corp.

Earn as high as 3.5%!
PSBank
US Dollar Time Deposit Rates*

	$1,000-9,999	$10,000-49,999	$50,000 & up
1 Month	2.500%	2.750%	3.000%
2 Months	2.750%	3.000%	3.250%
3 Months	3.000%	3.250%	3.500%
6 Months	3.250%	3.250%	3.500%
12 Months	3.250%	3.500%	3.600%

Visit any of our 121 PSBank Branches nationwide.

I am CHEVROLET

Take the Dream Ride. Test Drive a Chevrolet Optra!
Get FREE Shell gas coupons and a FREE Nestlé Ice Cream Mega Stick!
April 24 - Shell, The Port May 1 - Shell, Marcos Highway May 15 - The Podium, Ortigas
May 22 - West Gate, Alabang May 29 - SM North Edsa

Banks' bad loans declining

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BAD loan ratio of the country's commercial banks improved to 13.9 percent of their total loan portfolio in end-March from 14.24 percent in end-February, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported recently.

The non-performing loan ratio in March eased 1.6 percentage points better than the 15.5 percent ratio in the same month last year.

"The 1.6-percent contraction in NPLs was accompanied by the 1.4 percent rise in total loan portfolio," BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said in a press briefing.

The sector's NPL amounted to P147.40 billion in end-March compared to P153.92 billion a year ago.

The banks' total loan portfolio expanded to P1.38 trillion from P1.04 trillion in the same period last year.

The decline in the NPLs was due to the P6.58-billion combined reduction reported by 19 banks, offsetting the P4.6 billion combined increase by the NPLs of 14 other banks.

The remaining nine banks in the commercial banking industry reported no change in their NPLs.

Net of interest loans, the NPL ratio likewise dropped by 0.53 percentage point to 17.02 percent from 17.26 percent in February or 0.98 percentage point from 17.48 percent a year ago.

Buenaventura said the sector's NPLs should improve significantly later this year as banks were expected to dispose of their idle assets to meet the deadline to avail themselves of the perks offered by the Special Purpose Vehicle law.

"With the clarification of the tax issues and with the deadline looming ahead, I think you'll find last-minute accelerated sale of NPAs or otherwise, they have nobody to blame but themselves," Buenaventura said.

The SPV law, which took effect in April last year, intends to help banks get rid of their non-performing assets by making the transfer of the latest and reducing fees usually collected in the sale or transfer of assets. The law waived the documentary stamp tax, capital gains tax and e-VAT (expanded value added tax) and likewise reduced the registration/transfer fees by 50 percent.

The tax breaks and other benefits are available only up to April 6, 2005.

The BSP, for its part, has agreed to liberalize the loan/borrowing rules and regulations on the NPA law to speed up the banking sector's sale of non-performing assets.

The new guidelines allow the banks to retain a portion of the proceeds from an NPA transaction as reserves without declaring them as income. Under the previous implementing rules, banks were required to book a specific provisioning equivalent to net book value of assets put up for sale.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CIRCULAR No. 433
Series of 2004

The Monetary Board, in its Resolution No. 518 dated 15 April 2004, decided to allow banks to engage in repurchase agreements involving foreign currency-denominated government securities, subject to the following conditions:

a. The repurchase agreements shall involve only government securities held as Trading Account Securities under the foreign currency deposit unit (RCDU/expanded RCDU (ERCDU) banks;

b. The government securities subject of repurchase agreements are to be traded under the account "Government Securities Sold under Repurchase Agreements – FCDU/EFCDU";

c. The borrowings shall only be from FCDUs/EFCDUs, non-resident financial institutions and offshore banking units;

d. The maximum term of the repurchase agreements shall be one (1) year;

e. The borrowings shall be booked under "Bills Payable" and included in the computation of the total FCDU/EFCDU liabilities subject to the mandatory 100% asset cover and 30% liquidity cover;

f. The government securities used as collateral of the borrowing and any margin (in the form of cash or securities) that the lender will collect from the bank anytime the market value of the collateralized securities fall below the amount of the loan shall not be eligible for the 30% liquid asset cover requirement;

g. Banks shall, at all times, comply with the 100% FCDU/EFCDU asset cover and 30% liquidity cover; and

h. Banks shall monitor and assess the risks inherent in these repurchase transactions.

This Circular shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication either in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

For the Monetary Board:

(Sgd.) ALBERTO A. REYES
Officer-in-Charge

13 May 2004

San Miguel profit up 32%

SAN Miguel Corp., Southeast Asia's largest food and beverage firm, yesterday said its net income rose 32 percent to P2.42 billion in January to April from the same 2003 period.

The company said strong domestic and international beer operations lifted consolidated net sales to P53.3 billion, up 18 percent from year-ago level.

Consolidated operating income was up 30 percent to P4.96-billion.

Sales volume, according to the company, also grew 6 percent, although specific figures were not provided.

Domestic beer operating income amounted to P2.89 billion, or 29 percent better than last year.

Revenue from domestic beer operations as of April jumped 16 percent to P12.6 billion with volume growth of 22 percent.

International beer sales also grew 13 percent to volume in the first three months of 2004 with sales revenue reaching $79.1 million.

SMC reported its first quarter earnings jumped 26 percent to P1.73 billion, boosted by beer sales, its cash-based domestic and international beer sales as of March, climbed 33 percent.

SMC aims to be among Asia's top ten food and beverage firms by 2007. It has already identified seven countries for its regional expansion in Asia Pacific, which are Indonesia, Vietnam, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan and Australia.

PHILBEX
The Philippine Building and Construction Exposition
CEBU

FREE Admission & Parking

May 30, 31, June 1, 2004
Waterfront Cebu City Hotel and Casino

HIGHLIGHTS:
- FREE Seminar
- Architects' Gallery
- Fiesta Night
- Gayak Pilipino

I WISH to attend the PHILBEX SEMINAR '04

You may fax: (02) 533-2026

DISCLOSURES

ELECTED directors of **Southeast Resources Corp.** were Leonardo Aquendos, Helen Ong, Ricardo Alcantara, Alfonso Yuchengco Jr., Rolando Navarro, Alfred Yuchengco, Milagros Reyes, Susanne Santos and Vivenne Yuchengco.

* * *

ELECTED directors of **Liberty Flour Mills Inc.** were Jesus Jalandoni, William Carlos Uy, Felix Buenaventura Jr., Sergio Lozada, Jose Ma. Lopez, Benjamin Jalandoni, John Carlos Uy, Vincent Aragon, William Ang, Daniel Ng and Ricardo Sarte.

* * *

ELECTED directors of **Negros Navigation Company Inc.** were Daniel Lacson, Gerardo Gothaldo, Edward Go, Julio Lesaca Sr. Vivian Lilian, Jose Ma. Lim, Jose Manuel Mapa, Napoleon Nazareno, Oscar Nilura, Augusto Palacios Jr., Manuel Pangilinan, Alfredo Salazar and Edward Soriano.

* * *

JG Summit Holdings Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on July 27, 4 p.m. at the Monumento Hall of Holiday Inn Galleria Manila, Pasig City. Stockholders of record as of June 15 will be entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

* * *

BENGUET Corp. denied having any information that could explain the 50-percent increase in its share price that rose from P0.2 to P0.3 per share.

* * *

METROPOLITAN Bank and Trust Company declared a P0.08 per share cash dividend in favor of stockholders of record as of June 15.

* * *

JOSE Ma. Fuentebella was appointed acting corporate secretary of **Philippine Realty and Holdings Corp.**

* * *

SMART Finance Corp. declared a P0.2038 per share cash dividend to its set of stockholders of record as of June 15 and will be payable not later than July 5. A stock dividend of 2.46 percent was also declared with record date to be determined during the company's June 16 stockholders' meeting.

Compiled by Marcial P. Tolosa, PDI Research

Bourse lures firms to do IPO

By Elizabeth L. Sandoz

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange (PSE) is gearing ready-to-go success in five companies to conduct their maiden public offerings in the stock market this year.

Although declining to reveal the identity of these companies, PSE president Cayetano Wahing Jr. hinted that the exchange's targets belong to industries that were mandated to comply with the initial public offerings such as utility firms and oil companies.

"If we can get one or two companies to list, that is a sign of confidence and it should influence others to do the same," he said in a press briefing yesterday.

Aside from the PSE, firms that earlier listed in the stock market were Transpacific Broadcast Group International, Superstry Realty Development, Landcomdak Inc., Makati Finance Corp. These companies offered between 8 million and 76 million shares and raised between P8 million and P76 million in capital from their respective stock offerings.

Brokerage earlier said that the PSE has not received any word from Zalora Philippines Inc. and Philippine Shell Petroleum Corp. about the progress of a possible public offering.

He said the exchange will try to convince the oil firms to conduct an IPO as the PSE firms up its technical plans.

The two oil refiners are required under the downstream oil industry deregulation law to offer shares to the public.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), however, was informed of the possibility that Caltex might not pursue a public offering as the oil company converted its refinery into an import terminal.

Caltex and Shell were supposed to go public as early as February 2003, but the provision could not be enforced after the latter deputations ruled that the deadline was "only directory and not mandatory."

An IPO refers to the first sale of stocks by a private company to the public.

Securities and Exchange Commission Chair Lilia Bautista had urged companies like broadcast firm GMA Network Inc., mobile phone company Smart Communications Inc. and power supplier First Generation to list their shares at the stock exchange this year.

Smart is required by its franchise to offer its shares to the public. It earlier considered offering 30 percent of its outstanding capital.

PCCI: Meralco refund proposal using zero-coupon notes unacceptable

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE Chamber of Commerce and Industry yesterday said the Manila Electric Co.'s proposal to refund large customers with 42-month, zero-coupon promissory notes was unacceptable.

Meralco's proposal would be a big burden to the utility and that its resources would be drained, said Donald Dee, PCCI vice president.

"What the PCCI membership wants is to see a strong Meralco coming out of this refund process," Dee said during a press briefing yesterday.

Following a meeting of stockholders last Tuesday, Meralco officials said that they planned to use non-interest bearing papers to refund overcharges from its commercial and industrial customers. They said the company would formalize its proposal with the Energy Regulatory Commission next month.

"We will definitely object to that," Dee said.

In March, PCCI officials said the group, on behalf of consumer large electricity customers, was considering the option to convert part of Meralco's refund into shares of equities in the power firm.

In April 2003, the Supreme Court barred Meralco from passing on its income tax costs to customers and ordered officials of the power firm to refund what they had already collected.

The fourth and final phase of the Meralco refund totals P4.6.6 billion, representing income tax charges passed on to commercial and industrial customers between February 1996 and April 2003.

Dee said the PCCI had been tasked by other business organizations to take the lead in determining how the refund to large users should be done.

For residential users, Meralco had either given out the refund money in cashiers or credited in amounts to future bills.

"Our main rationale is to find a solution that will serve better the [Meralco] shareholders as well as the consuming public," Dee said. "We would like to see a stronger Meralco."

He said the refund through equity could come in the form of preferred shares or common shares.

Nenaco runs risk of foreclosure if it doesn't settle ₱370-M debt

By Abigail L. Ho

HOME DEVELOPMENT Bank of the Philippines could list the foreclosure of Bogus Navigation Co. Inc.'s assets should the company fail to meet its due and demandable loan obligations worth almost P370 million.

Inasmuch as principal petitioner's loan obligation in favor of creditor DBP (Isla) is long been due and demandable, and considering the fact that the former cannot, or is not willing, to comply with its obligation in the regular way (ordinary cash payment), it is beyond doubt that foreclosure is the proper remedy," according to an 18-page opposition to Nenaco's petition for corporate rehabilitation.

The government bank also opposed Nenaco's proposed 10-year rehabilitation plan, saying the plan contained misleading information and was not at all viable.

Ben Castillo, DBP senior vice president, said that something so basic as the company's financial history was not truthfully described in Nenaco's petition.

According to its petition, Nenaco said it had been "operating a viable and financially profitable business since its inception."

However, DBP showed a subtle marking the dropping firm's profitability history, which showed that the company was in the red from 1997 to 2001.

According to the same table, Nenaco had also had negative retained earnings from 1998 to 2002.

The DBP also said the rehabilitation plan did not contain "the projected operational and income parameters that would give the creditors the confidence that debt repayment could be accomplished during the 10-year rehabilitation period."

"For another, the petitioner's so-called rehabilitation plan is merely a note sheet with no verifiable economic assumptions," the DBP added.

The bank also refused to accept Nenaco's request that it had been unable to repay its debts as they matured because of the refloating of the peso against the dollar.

"The petitioner did not exercise prudence and sound financial management when it entered into agreements for US dollar denominated loans," according to the DBP paper.

"The petitioner knows that all its revenue sources are denominated in peso and do not have a natural hedge against depreciation of the Philippine peso against the US dollar. Hence, the petitioner's financial position is a result of their obvious mismanagement."

Castillo also questioned the qualifications of appointed Nenaco rehabilitation receiver Sulpicio Tugad Jr. DBP officials based their reservation on Tugad's perceived lack of experience in managing a shipping company and their involvement in the rehabilitation of a shipping firm.

Citing all these points, the DBP urged Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 46 to deny Nenaco's petition for rehabilitation as far as the DBP was concerned and to consider lifting the stay order on loans to DBP.

The bank also asked the court to review the appointment of Tugad as the receiver.

On March 25, representatives of the Japanese ship-building firm Imamichi Heavy Industries (Cebu) attempted to seize a Nenaco ship—the St. Peter the Apostle—with 700 passengers on board.

Nenaco reportedly owes Imamichi P116 million in dry-docking services and repair.

Imamichi lawyers tried to force the hand of Nenaco officials by seizing the ship—the subject of a garnishment case—while demanding partial payment of P35 million.

Nenaco said that it had already paid Imamichi P27 million for previous services and had been encouraging an amicable renegotiation of the payment terms.

But Imamichi officials denied claims of partial settlement, adding that they have not been paid since 2002.

PCA seeks to double RP coco production

By Clemente A. Capilayan

PULUPUTOL coconut production over the next two years may double to 4 million metric tons, in order—almost double the figure of last year's output—through a fertilization project which the government wants to implement, the Philippine Coconut Authority said.

But Emilio Corpuz, PCA administrator, said local farmers may not be able to afford the cost of the project.

"For the fertilization to be effective, the application has to be done over a period of three years," Corpuz told reporters.

He said the fertilization would entail some of P32,100 per hectare a year, or P9,096,300/ha for the entire three-year period.

According to Corpuz, current 750,000 hectares of coconut farmlands, out of the country's total coconut area of 3.1 million hectares, are "non-productive" and in dire need of fertilization.

"The current yield of coconuts is only 25 percent of the genetic potential, which means we have a 75 percent leeway to increase output if we fertilize," he said.

Corpuz also said another 490,000 hectares need to be replanted over a period of five years as coconut trees planted in these areas are "senile" or unproductive.

Funding requirement for replanting is even higher at P40,000 per hectare over a period of five years, he said.

"Without these fertilization and replanting project, coconut output will decline by 25 percent in two years," he added.

To help farmers with the fertilization and replanting projects, the PCA is set to ask the Presidential Commission on Good Government to allow the PCA to use the proceeds of the 2003 dividends of the 27 percent shares of stocks in food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp. or SMC, believed to have been purchased with the coco levy fund, Estrada-Cuzon said.

The 2003 dividends from the 27 percent of SMC shares are estimated at P800 million to P1.2 billion, he added.

Guidelines for good governance ignored

From page A1

would then discuss the measure underlining of responsibility shortage, if there was any. In their separate, without the expected follow-up meeting, DA announced the very next day both the volume and timing of the poultry importation.

Already, foreign prices have started to decrease because of this announced importation. It is feared that this may soon approach low levels, adding to the severe losses due to the avian flu virus earlier this year. The irony is that retail prices could have decreased significantly through implementing both the price lag and anti-profiteering laws without importing the already barely break-even foreign prices.

If the government's changing of business rules continues without adequate private sector consultation, business will have an unstable and unpredictable environment. Investments will decrease, imports will increase, and jobs will be lost.

Conclusion

San Diego is working a meeting with the DA to address the regulatory issues of good governance that affect the poultry industry today. One is to implement the price lag and anti-profiteering laws to address the unscrupulous retailers, who have increased market prices to unjustified levels. The other is to complete the private sector consultation to more realistically assess the volume and timing of poultry shortage. (Ends).

Since this affects the 1 million Filipinos currently employed in the poultry industry today, this meeting must be an important step to implementing the Alyansa Agribusiness agenda now agreed upon by the five presidential candidates. "Ensure proper pricing and timing of government imports." It will also help in our desire for good governance.

(The author is chair of Agrimark, a private sector multidisciplinary consortium of agriculture and trade and industry, and former chair and Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects. For inquiries or suggestions, e-mail agrimark@philamlife.com or mail to PO Box 1136, QCCPO.)

LIFESTYLE

What exactly is the Boracay lifestyle?

Gilbert Cruz, Patti Glaza Pisuas and Pepi Lumbre

IN HIS quirky amulet eye, we looked like General MacArthur and his troops in the fantastic Leyte landing as we docked and waded into the shores of Boracay the impossibly tall Ramona Diaz leading the way with no trailing behind.

Incidentally, however, save the tableau differently. The waist one collective silhouettes looked like a walking-one-million jeans, the size swapsy Ramona being the owner's cri-ine, and all of us round as the

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sinconet Saet Shirt

The summer that was, we all about body-shapes and-sizes, and if there had been any doubt if there were such a thing as a fitness lifestyle, it vanished.

It is what a happy and creative Filipino, if left alone by government, can carve out for himself

What exactly is the Boracay lifestyle?

First page C1

Among the things that keep Filipinos party today is their escape to the island—away from the rat race and the ills in government. We have a couple of friends who decided to settle down there (one resident society icon Louie Gruet and former Metro managing editor **Fredie Burlo**, and, ostensibly, the **Gilmore Edd Parsons**.

Just what exactly is this Boracay lifestyle/craze that lures/entices/drives about? What genuinely has been drawing tourists and locals to it?

Perhaps because government and politicians have nothing, or only the least, to do with its evolution, the Boracay lifestyle works. Like the Indonesian Malaise that just came to be, Boracay epitomizes the free and wild spirit that is the Filipino. It reminds us of what a happy and creative Filipino, if left alone by governments, can carve out for himself.

Even with the rules, curiously precale-cumbine to come to Boracay.

Last summer, Lifestyle Network, to celebrate its anniversary, began its *Life Entertainment* series in Boracay. "Think island! Think island!" **Bianchet Olives** kept telling us. What he meant, it precisely what makes Boracay work.

There you think island, and ignore your body-revealable you-shouldn't-be-in-a-swimsuit bulk. I mean, you don't get conscious about it, whatever shape/size you are. And there's every imaginable shape/size roaming the sands. Inspiration needs no permit. Once you step down to your bunker (or what passes for it) and slippers (if bananas are bananas), you plunge right into the Boracay lifestyle.

Telecarrier chatter

Which is You're either Smart or Globe. There's no escaping this land, all in one—from the posters in the nests of the mambabatos on the shores. That's how relentless, dangerous and fiercely competitive their marketing campaigns is.

A forearm width of a Boracay surface is shut down telecom giants contract an environment conservation program that begins with tabbing the related of clutter and debris that is their marketing collaterals. The expense will only be a drop in their bucket, and if they really think about it, is the low marketing

LAW Tan and **Jon-Jon Bolivar**

campaign lesson so Globe can ever beat. Its mileage is long-term, at that.

Tan-yan a couple is a big pull? That's a casual question popped by a couple. Jared Louie to the girl: "See you at tourist to the pool's nipples or legs?" That's turning the table on the men. The girls do the body-watching, for a change. That's the spirit of the lifestyle —irreverent, fluid (no such thing as unjust gender), loose and super-**libadas**.

Food, food, food. What's interesting is, all types of cuisine are shaping up. Manokan is one game in this, and **Puff Pasta Platter** our ever-willing consumers.

Another investment as to the Portuguese cuisine at Bonzo, its location and seafood zest. Or say on dinner at Jara, with a bottle of Pinot Grigio, as an leisurely-watched people with by.

Think island. At night, it was dinners at good old home cooking at Louie and **Mike Rivera** Mikmakko. Think push to-segregate).

Shopping? There are good, unique buys. Boracay is getting to be defined by its merchandise, too, apart from its food. The cacillas boni and bone at surreal markets. The requisite talk-body bags at Mcbandcraft, a boutique loops opened across from the resto. The clothes at Beads collection. You can rummage in this store all afternoon and come up with good finds—from summer-end to vintage chic.

You never leave Greenbelt. That's the irony. You flee the city to meander

Jon-Jon Bolivar with the 50" Philips Pixel Plus Plasma TV

night smack into the city on the beach. That's Boracay. There were debates and **Dave Lillian** and family, the Boracay beach leader, an **Angelo Villanueva** doing his ballerina movements at Cocoranges, the lifestyle circles Boats by Lifestyle Network, including **Tina Pantaleon**, **Jean-Jun Robles**, **Archie Rodriguez**, **Ana Valdes**, **Gina Lopez** and her meditation team. They-was-one-weekend shoot. It's the Greenbelt scene, de-scenard-version.

It's the sunset, not the suntan, People in Boracay are no dead-sleep or worked out to crush the exercise. But they can work up the melancholy to blend with the waves. I would assured and bewildered between **Bobbie Cayetano** and **Tim Yap** at the two explained, pondered, convinced them, echoes why and how there's a good life after and without a relationship for now. It's a sunset communion that not even a Louie Gruet could straighten out last it be.

After morning after? He such thing as the island. The night goes on and on till 7 the next morning. We can never forget the sight of a sleepless Lani Tan wearing dark shades at 7 a.m. catching up with us as the airport for the early morning flight back to Manila. After staying up all night, he had a scenic summary as it all— Tyang Jenjo employee) was dancing con Jr. manoong matulog!"

E-mail the author at vom *jun@skyinf.net*

High-tech, high-style TV

PHILIPS Consumer Electronics (PCE) recently launched its latest product, the *Pixel Plus Plasma TV*.

It combines the advanced Pixel Plus innovation and the award-winning Plasma design. The Pixel Plus technology delivers an unprecedented two million pixels in the screen, giving the most astounding picture quality with the clearest and most natural details.

The TV also comes in an ultra-slim design, bringing our only high technology, but also style savvy into your home.

The latest Philips product is a testament to the company's dedication to continuously improve its products.

"Our place as a major industry leader comes not just by bringing our consumers 'world-class' top quality products, but also making sure that we improve on these products to suit their changing needs and lifestyles," said PCE general manager Angela Valenzon.

The launch included a photo exhibit featuring the homes of Richard and Lucy Gomez, Sonia Prieto-Valdes, and Julius and Christine Babao, the very first people in the Philippines to own the Philips Pixel Plasma TV.

Curious users also given a firsthand look at how Philips technology works through a "dare to compare regional," which provided comparisons between Pixel Plus Plasma TV's smoother, four-key images and regular TV sets from two other brands.

E-mail your g.ong@philips.com or visit www.philips.com/tvtowerlist

PCE Consumer Display Product manager Mark Gu-Maria, general manager Angela Valenzon, marketing manager Tess Sioquia with celebrities Tessa Prieto-Valdes and Julius and Christine Babao

MARIA Luisa Perez-Rubio with her one-of-a-kind bougainvillea collection

LDW-growing variegated bougainvillea

Maria Luisa Perez-Rubio has old favorite rose and bougainvillea varieties no longer available in most nurseries

Gardens to inspire nostalgia

Text by Tita V. Given
Photos by Jim Gatus Pascua

LOSABLE gardens like those many people's grandmothers used to tend will make an exclusive place in Silang, Cavite different from other leisure housing farms sprouting in the outer cynides.

Imagine Mexican-Spanish style houses with quaint gardens of roses, bougainvillea, flamboyán and lotus. There will also be pines and evergreens like exotic junipers and cypress.

And elsewhere on the 43-hectare Dasmariñas Leisure Farm are rolling hills with blooming bushes and vines, a coconut grove, trellised walkways and arbors with old-fashioned benches and lampposts.

Already taking shape is the village meditation park called *Bahagui* which will have a medley of trees, vines, ground cover and flowering plants. It will be a garden for the senses: rocks of all kinds to touch and feel, aromatic herbs to smell and trickling water to listen to while meditating.

Landco Pacific, property developer, hopes all this and more will persuade prospective buyers to invest in the project. "Residence is envisioned to be a community to boom," marketing officers say. "It is designed to bring garden lovers together where they can interact, lend their garden without worry or hassle, or just enjoy the beauty of flowers and the company of kindred spirits."

Whether or not Landco succeeds in its efforts to sell the property to garden lovers will be greatly boosted by Maria Luisa Perez-Rubio, owner of the land where Pasalverde Leisure Farm is.

Perez-Rubio is a well-known garden lover and owner of the rose farm found within the 43-hectare property. Her rose farm has been supplying blooms to sidewalk outlets since the early 1970s. The founding president of the Makati Garden Club is personally overseeing the village landscaping.

Garden of nostalgia

If the seventeen plant lovers have her way, every garden in the village will have sweet-smelling roses, her favorite flowers. No doubt when prospective buyers see her rose farm and the meditation park the herself is landscaping they will probably change...if not altogether abandon—their own garden ideas.

Of the 3,500-square meter meditation park, Perez-Rubio says, "No rigid landscape. Just add touches here and a natural look there." It will have a waterfall that will flow into a stream, about 26.50 meters long. Aside from roses, honeysuckle and bougainvillea, the park will have exotic pine trees, all supplied by her garden farm.

The garden farm itself is a showcase of beautiful landscaping plants as well as old favorite rose and bougainvillea varieties no longer available in most nurseries. "Most of my bougainvillea collection came from Tita Baby Barbers in Ilocos," she said. (Tita Bar-

GARDENS C4

EVERGREENS are planted in drums to control growth.

Gardens to inspire nostalgia

Foreground

hues was the bougainvillea collector's favorite bauble in the 1970s).

Her private collection includes a new variety called "Evan." Such bougainvillea she has been nurturing for over 40 years, thornless varieties, and a 10-year old long-growing bonsai that flowers profusely throughout the year. There are also the Temple Fire, Dame White, Purple King, Rainbow, Variegated and many more.

Her collection of Melaleuca trees from Australia is another must-see. She show them off in good landscaping material, she says them as windbreakers along the commercial garden. Visitors can also see different species, Melaleuca Revolution Green and M. Revolution Gold, at El Retiro.

Other interesting plants in the nursery are junipers. She calls the various she has Hollywood juniper, Japanese juniper and Cryptomeria. Her prize collection includes the Hibiscus plant, Mediterranean pine and Bougain plant.

Leisure farm amenities

Mendoza Leisure Farms, according to marketing people, will also have flower and ornamental demonstration gardens. In addition, it will have a commercial center, market place and an outdoor restaurant.

Alfred Xerxes Burgos III, vice president and group head of Leisure Farms, notes the project is barely an hour away from Makati via the Sta. Rosa exit on the south superhighway or via Tagaytay. It is near hospitals, golfer-residents, schools, churches and commercial areas.

Although garden markets in Tagaytay, Calamba, Los Baños and Sasmuan, are nearby, Perez-Rubio's efforts may make it unnecessary for prospective buyers to go elsewhere for their garden needs.

For more information about the gardens of Pendemac Leisure Farms, call 807-2222 loc. 373.

IBP to help prosecute environment law violators

SEEING GREEN

Doris Gamboa Nayahe

A DENR-DENR of agreement (MOA) was signed in April between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) that will strengthen the implementation of environmental laws.

The memorandum aims to protect DENR field officers from harassment suits—civil, criminal and administrative. Under the agreement, field officers no longer need to find helpless in the face of such harassment for now they can count on logistical and legal help.

The IBP and other legal defenders of DENR personnel, will render pro bono services (free assistance) in the prosecution of violators of environmental and natural resources laws, like illegal loggers, especially when high-profile prosecutions are involved.

The assistance will be managed by a committee to be established by a DENR official in charge of legal affairs, with IBP representation. The secretariat will serve as nerve center of information, networking and activity. It will have the authority to dispatch private lawyers on special assignments to assist in the prosecution of environmental law offenses. The secretariat will also submit cases involving DENR personnel.

Incidentally, even before the collaboration between the DENR and IBP can become operational, cases from different parts of the country have already been filed with the environmental Ombudsman.

Monitoring team

The coming up of a Joint Task monitoring Team was also taken up in the MOA. The team is to be composed of members of the DENR, the Department of Justice, the Supreme Court and non-government organizations. It will implement laws and monitor environmental law violations, particularly forestry law offenses.

The IBP National Environmental Action Team, Bernard Noveras, last 2003, will be its co-office member of the Joint Monitoring Team. The DENR will provide assistance in the handling of pro bono services under the MOA, and in meeting other needs to facilitate the prosecution process, among others.

The MOA was signed by Elisea G. Gozun, DENR secretary, and Jose Anselmo L. Cadiz, IBP national president.

This move is long overdue. For years now, forest rangers and other DENR field enforcers have not only been harassed but also victimized in the performance of their duties. They have been hurt, even killed. Often, because the persons involved are powerful, the DENR people are the ones who would find themselves in jail.

Pollution in Iloilo

Meanwhile, we received a complaint from a reader, E.L., on garbage and pollution in his hometown, Iloilo City. Besides from the city dump, he says, has spread to the some areas the enclosure several places, including Guimaras on to longer visible from the city. He asks about the environmental Ombudsman we mentioned in an earlier column.

This new development—the MOA between the DENR and IBP—is the answer to his questions. All he needs to do it to submit his complaint to the legal affairs officer of the local DENR or, better still, while the organizational process is still going on, write/e-mail two people deeply involved in the work: Antonio Oposa, environmental lawyer and national chair of the IBP National Environmental Action Team, at G/F Wet Gate Tower, Greenhills Drive, Madrigal Industrial Park, Alabang, Muntinlupa City, or e-mail aoposa@oposa.com; and Wilbert S. Candelaria, natural facilitator, at 15 Aslo Negas Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City e-mail ibp_nea@yahoo.com.

Contact writer at doriesnay@yahoo.com.

TESSA beaded crochet shoulder bag

11 Filipinas in the bag

LIZ LIM metallic sheepskin slouchy hobo bag

By Cinelin V. Mural

"WOMEN want to stand apart and not have what everybody else has."

These were the words of New York accessories designer Rafe Totengco in an interview with the Inquirer in September 2003. The young Baguio native then in Manila to receive the Ten Outstanding Young Men award for fashion, the first time an award was given in that category.

"That's where I come in," he added, "to give them something special."

For some women, Manila would soon find out, it was everywhere special.

Totengco, who's earned international renown for his bags and accessories label Rafe New York, launches his Spring 2004 Collection with bags and shoes inspired by and named after 11 Filipinas. A photo exhibit of the collection by photographer-couple Mel Cacnio and Claudine Diaz is on display at MOL Boutique in Greenbelt, where Rafe is also exclusively available.

The exhibit is titled "Bag Ladies," and will run until the end of May.

While this is not the first time Totengco has named a design after someone (watch is called a woman's name) much less a Filipina (in 2002, he presented the Tina bag, after Rhi cameo Tina Marinella Ocampo), this is the first time Mrs Totengco is presenting the all-Filipina inspired collection together.

The women, either friends or acquaintances of Totengco, include Felicia Atienza, Stanley salesgirl Gisele Zabel, former governor Ting Ting Cojuangco, model-columnist Rhea Santos, magazine editor Pauline Rasmussen, entrepreneur Mandy de la Rama-Santos, Vera Co-Unjieng, columnist Celine Lopez, accessories designer Bea Valdes, literature Gilmyde columnist Tessa Prieto-Valdes and Marinella Ocampo.

According to MOL Totengco chose to honor these "remarkable" women who are "admired by many" for the success they have achieved in their respective fields.

TINE Ting classic hobo/tote Rafe and Mandy shoulder bag

Full creative control

The collections make use of delectable soft hot-colored canvas, lambskin, metallic brocade, cotton, pebble grain and patent leather.

Lazcano and Sia, who describe their working style as "very loose," conceptualized the shoot in "20 minutes" and wrapped up the project in three days. They did everything from the styling to writing the one-line descriptions of the women behind the bags.

"Rhea (Santos, Tina's husband) gave us full creative control," said Sia. Since the women won't be photographed, Ocampo's only instruction was that the photos reflected their distinct personalities.

"It actually suited us that we didn't know them," Lazcano said about the women. "The bags were the subjects, after all," his wife added.

Taking the personal favorites of Sia, a longtime friend of Totengco, are "De Niro's Lizzie" with the python, and the skinny wedge sandals (because) with the rosewine interior.

E-mail the author at mural@inquirer.com.ph

FELICIA coated canvas and leather tote

PAULINE Apple Orchard canvas and leather satchel

Rafe Totengco's latest accessories collection and an accompanying photo exhibit pay tribute to a clutch of trailblazing local women

MANDY platform wedge espadrilles

CELINE leather-trimmed, leaf-print cotton/linen purse

MOTHER and daughter pals. Mega lawyer Katrina Legarda and daughter Bela

CHILDHOOD. Adidas Manila models Tim Yap and Bianca Araneta as the popular Italian road duo

EDD Furnes and Boracay Foundation president Lara Salazar

MESTIZA vice president and group project manager for beverages Eugene David (left) and Mexena brand manager Tina Samaco with her fiancée

MARC Nelson, Celine de Mendoza and Mexena marketing vice president for promotions and events Mary Mignon

MESTIZA events specialist Yen Rosabella and events manager Jaquee Tan Piso

Dazzling denim action and wild beach volleyball spree

LEVI'S brand leader Steve Buenaventa fashion by guest models Bargy Montes and Audrey Tai

COOKSOPE debuting Marvin Valdes and Audrey Canyon

MOTO2 boutique designer Miguel Rocales with his fiancée Valentina

COSMO Mazilla's hip movers and shakers recently ventured the boundless traffic and descended on the first level of Rockwell Power Plant Mall to pay tribute to Levi's!

Yes, palanggas, Levi's, the original name in denim wear, received a toast from denim devotees and loose-fide style seekers.

Leading the pack were Levi's brother-sweetie manager Blondie Edmeade and sister cousin, Jinny by Alex there were brand leader Steve Buenaventa and marketing manager Michelle Bonifacio.

Tim Yap, leader of the blue jeans crowd, hosted the show with energy and finesse.

He never let on the Power Plant Mall's fountain area where nine of Manila's top fashionistas unveiled an exhibit of their specially customized Levi's 501 jeans.

Isaac Indira Philippine fashion's resident prince of slim mods, introduced his creation titled "Uranus," which made use of black denim.

Isaac told us, "I wanted something unique, yet still something classy."

The design took a bit as instrumental brains maneuvered their fascinator to buy the creation.

Always colorful and energetic, Rissa Pilotta-Valdes injected an ethnic note to her Levi's 501 pair, "Tribal Rabidoscope," an African nature-inspired piece of work. It was wildlife and wild style that only a Rissa could afford.

Trivia Pauline Gu-Unjieng, still stunningly gorgeous, was joined by her three sons in her "Da 'It Bench," a collage of artworks and treated photographs of cookies and rock, sewn into the jeans.

Bea Valdes, the beautiful and talent-made entrepreneur and fang designer, left no stone unturned in her creation inspired "Don't Be Art." The work was a marvel in detail, understated elegance, casual spunk and sensual innocent.

Chef du jour and style maven Margarita Forés did "Sensilina Stripe," which featured jeans sown into the side pipings and bottom part.

"I love fashion; but I certainly love food more. So with this pair, I am able to marry both," Tessa said.

Fashion count Blandy de la Rama-Santos, represented by her equally stylish sister Gabbie de la Rama, created a fun, vivacious and dynamic twist to her "Bebasilla Alexandria."

Spitfire Tim Yap was inspired by Peter Pan's youthful exuberance with his creation "Jeni, Jeni Land."

Designer Kate Torralba came fully "pinoneered out," with a Jack Russell by her side, clothed in the same Pacific-inspired denim ball gown.

At guests viewed the gorgeous exhibition, plaster Levi's pieces were paraded by a show of cutting-edge denim wear.

The surprise appearance of tennis ex-bet Mr. Miguel Pangilinan, the attractive Audrey Tan, with that hunk of a guy, Borgy Montes, sent the crowd swooning, natch.

A smashing party of iconic proportions, indeed, thrice Levi's, dahlings.

Boracay action

With its gorgeous close waters and powdery white sands, Boracay has always been my victim to an exciting summer.

Well, as expected, palanggas, this top summer haven took the plunge when it played host to the 6th Sentosa Beach Volley Ito culmination of the Nestea Beach Volley 2004, which offered thrilling beach action and the most happening activities.

The highly successful three-day event was participated in by exceptional beach volley athletes. It was also graced by many beautiful faces and bodies, local officials and bonkers from the corporate world.

Seventy-two teams from 46 colleges and universities nationwide competed. Twenty-four teams from 19 schools made it to the semis and final rounds, all competing for a total of over a cool half a million peso worth of prizes and cool beach products.

Nestlé bar shots were there, such as vice president for promotions Mary Mignon, vice president and product manager for beverages Eugene David, marketing and promotions manager Nicky Gaspay, brand manager Tina Samaco, events manager Johnetta Tan-Piso, events specialist Yen Rodabilla, assistant vice president Bunny Carrimudo and assistant manager Jaime Lim.

The guests were welcomed by Shiley Mayor Encinas Corralling and Norway Natalie Ilon president Lara Salazar.

But that's not all. Here was the venue of the super Nestea Cool Cocktail Challenge, a bar-tending competition. Eight bartenders from Boracay's hottest hangout to work their drink-mixing skills as they created deliciously refreshing concoctions using Nestea.

The thrilling volleyball course was won by the women's team of Southwestern University and the men's team of the University of San Jose-Recoletos. These energetic players clearly demonstrated that they had the goods to fight it out on sand.

In the women's division, in second place was the University of the Visayas, and in third place, Adamson University.

In the men's division, in second place was De La Salle University and in third, Southwestern University.

Sponsors were the Ayala Center Cebu, Cebu Pacific, Coppertone, Power Plant Mall, Shakeys, Smart Buddy, Speedo and TM Holiday's.

Over all, dahlings, the 6th Nestea Beach Volley lived up to its reputation as "the most anticipated summer sports spectacle," making it an affair to definitely look forward to each year.

CHOW time for hosts Rish Herrera

PEARL of the Pacific's Rica Sexson

MALAY Mayor Cindrae Corralling

MY favorite MTV VJ, KC Montero

FASHIONABLE GALS. Tricia Pauline Gu-Unjieng and Bing Jacinto

STYLE-MAKERS. Margarita Forés, Isaac Indira, Levi Strauss country manager Wendie Elkano and Tessa Prieto-Valdes

MARVELLE'S stylish boss designer Kate Torralba, top choreographer Bobbie Carmona and his models Nicolmee Bell and Rissa Samson

THE GANG of four. Vincent Fernando, Sarat Pearnell, emcees Dr. Cris Silverio and renowned DJ Toot Jojo Silverio

BLUE denim gals. Gabbie de la Rama and Margo Valdes

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arnaiche

Photos by Alex Van Hagen with Rodish Mau